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The New Dimension to Palestinian Struggle**

ABUL KALAM AZAD

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Intifada—The New Dimension to Palestinian Struggle

Abul Kalam Azad

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INTRODUCTION

The history of the land of Palestine and its people, the Palestinians, is a long and chequered one. These people who once belonged to a country with distinctive geographical, political and cultural identity ultimately became the victims of Israel's Zionist ideology by a mere accident of history, and were later on destined only to be swamped and dominated by the aggressive and uncompromising Jews. However, despite the onslaught of Zionist persecution and suppression the Palestinians in their struggle for freedom and right of self-determination have resorted to all means ranging from terrorism to diplomacy to establish their legal rights.

In essence, the conflict between the two distinct groups, the Arabs and Jews centers around a piece of territory over which they have conflicting claims and views, although there are enough historical, physical and legal evidence to show that the land in dispute belonged to the former. As a result, there has been a deep and cardinal disagreement between these two antagonistic groups about the very existence of each other in this region. In this connection it would, perhaps, not be an exaggeration to say that the Arab-Israeli problem is unparalleled among today's regional conflicts. Following World War II, the persistence and intensity of the problem, the recurring violence and turmoil it has caused, and its potential threat to international peace and security have ultimately turned the conflict into one of the most explosive and destabilizing conflicts in contemporary politics.

Since the creation of Zionist Israel, many of the Arab countries got entangled in the conflict with Israel over the Palestinian issue.

Although these countries supported the Palestinians from time to time with political and economic resources, the fact remains that it was principally the Palestinians who have pioneered the movement for their emancipation from the Zionist regime. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) with its dual strategy of armed resistance (al-kifah al-Musallah) and diplomacy has passed through several phases of struggle surmounting numerous odds like unfavourable undercurrents in Arab politics, the aggressive and recalcitrant policy of Israel, the conspiracy of the super powers and the indifference of the Arab countries to their cause. The most insurmountable problem confronting the PLO in the diaspora was its physical alienation from a majority of its people living directly under Israel's illegal occupational rule. Nevertheless, the struggle against the Zionist regime also has its internal dimension as resistance in somehow attenuated form was also spearheaded by a significant number of local leaders to realize the same aim and goal professed by the PLO outside.

It is to be borne in mind that the Palestine problem is a very complex one marked by a series of developments with bewildering swiftness. Over the years the search for a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict by different quarters has been associated with a number of peace plans, proposals, agreements, diplomatic initiatives and missions. Despite all these, no practical solution has yet been found out to resolve the issue so as to bring a reconciliation between the two hostile groups. Consequently, the Palestinians under Israeli occupation were left to live as captives of Zionist exploitative rule characterized by injustice, open aggressions, violation of human rights and all other norms of international law. On the other hand, the Palestinians in the diaspora had little option to deal with mighty Israel whose militancy and obduracy virtually rendered all peace efforts fruitless. More frustrating to the Palestinians living in and out of the occupied territories was the manner in which their case has been handled so far by the countries both within and outside the region.

In the face of continuing predicaments, much exacerbated by Israel's uncompromising and rigid attitude, the Palestinians had no choice but to continue their struggle for survival. Finally a upheaval with a phenomenal shape gave a new dimension to their struggle when the masses in the occupied territories in defiance of Israel's restrictive rules and regulations concerning then openly revolted against the authority of the country with a view to breaking the prevailing status quo. This epochal development which is still an on-going event in the occupied territories goes by the celebrated name of *intifada*, the Arabic word for uprising. Intifada is basically an off-shoot of the whole Palestine problem and thus can not be viewed in isolation from it. It has been a turning point in the history of the Palestinian resistance movement as for the first time it has turned the Arab-Israeli conflict into a direct Palestinian-Israeli conflict now.

The current uprising is the truly grass roots rebellion in the history of four decades old Arab-Israeli conflict—a movement that is being carried out by a new generation of unarmed people and leaders with the ostensible aim of realizing their long professed goal—a separate homeland for the displaced and uprooted Palestinians. In this respect, there is the convergence of aims and goals between the Palestinian rebellions inside the occupied territories and the PLO movement simultaneously going on outside.

Today the Palestinian question has been propelled to the top of the world political agenda, and in this connection the current *intifada* has engendered world wide support for the Palestinian struggle as well as condemnation of the Israeli atrocities and brutal repression. The uprising in the occupied territories at the same time has resulted in a social change in the Palestinian society breeding a sense of identity, solidarity and a new national awareness. This in turn has led to a quest for peace with dignity pushing PLO towards moderation and compromise. The new policy of moderation, flexibility and realism largely generated by the

current intifada has led Arafat to recognize Israel as a reality in this part of the region. This has, in turn, facilitated the PLO leader to declare an independent Palestinian state in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza strip. Following his declaration, the recognition of the new state by a number of countries has been one of the most illustrious diplomatic gains the PLO has achieved so far.

Intifada is still a living phenomenon in the occupied territories. However, the Palestine problem despite showing some sign of positive signals towards a possible solution still seems to remain in political limbo largely due to the irreconcilable policy of Israel. As a consequence, the long intractable Palestine problem is being increasingly marked by the intensification of present uprising, the perpetuation of Israeli atrocities to quash the uprising, and a number of efforts both by the PLO and other relevant parties to bring this insuperable problem to its dead end.

Taking into consideration the fact that intifada is an inseparable part of the total Palestine problem, this paper is an attempt to study the new political phenomenon from different perspectives.

The first section of the paper deals with a brief background of how the Palestinians became victims of Zionist design through a conspiratorial historical process. The second section of the paper gives a short description of Arab-Israeli conflicts since the inception of Israel. The purpose is to gauge how the Palestinian movement moved along the various political developments in this region. The third section details a brief account of the resistance movement under the PLO with Yasser Arafat as its head. The purpose is to bring to knowledge the various forces, both favourable and unfavourable that the PLO faced ever since it started its proclaimed journey towards the Palestinian right of freedom and self-determination. The fourth section is an attempt to place the current intifada in historical perspective. Two sub-sections are apportioned to it: (i) the resistance movement inside the occupied territories, (ii)

the occupation policy of Israel. The fifth section deals with some of the characteristics that distinguish the intifada from the earlier resistance movement. The sixth section deals with some of the effects that the current intifada has yielded so far. The last section attempts to focus on the current position of intifada and the overall status of the Palestine problem at present. The paper ends with a general conclusion by the author.

GENESIS AND BACKGROUND OF THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

Despite there being a barrage of literature on the issue of Palestine, the fact remains that much of it is coloured by hopes and fear, by wishes and desires, by prejudice and propaganda. Moreover, most of the people seem to look at the issue being loaded with emotion, ideological rhetorics and theological feeling. Thus delving deep into such an intricate issue would require an objective assessment of the overall situation.

A.G. Keller, the great teacher of anthropology and sociology at Yale once said, "might does not make right, it makes both right and wrong"¹. As revealed by historical facts, the background of Palestine problem runs though a single thread of Jewish might exerted to do wrong and injustice to the weaker masses of Palestine in utter contravention of international law and ethics. Such wrongs have been committed on the basis of Jewish biblical claim that Palestine is their original homeland—an argument that may at any time question today the entire political map.

The question of right and wrong may arise between the Arab Palestinians and Jews if the issue of Palestine is viewed from a religious angle. But an interpretation of history based on religion would simply be myopic in nature. Moreover, such an interpretation does not give a satisfactory objective answer to the problem

1. William Yale, *The Near East*, (Michigan, The University of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 381.

as there is no evidence to prove that the will of Jehovah is more just than that of Allah².

Thus, realism demands that the issue of Palestine is to be placed in a perspective that takes into account a plethora of political developments through the vicissitude of time and history.

The history of the land that is called Palestine now goes back to the hoary days of king David, king Solomon and a number of Hebrew Prophets. By 1000 BC the scattered Jewish tribes that lived in Canaan (later called land of Israel) later on united to form a prosperous kingdom³. The prosperity of the Jews was short lived due to internal revolt that eventually split their land into two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, only to succumb later on to the conquests by the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and others. The Romans, after having conquered the land renamed the country Palestine. In the first century they compelled many Jews to leave Palestine from where they scattered to many lands. This dispersion is referred to as the diaspora. The Arabs conquered Palestine in the 7th century and ruled it till the end of 11th century. Later on, European dominated Crusader kingdoms were established at various times during the 11th, 12th and 13th centuries. Palestine came under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire until the 20th century⁴.

During World War I, the Palestinians revolted against the Ottoman Empire in return for a British promise of complete national independence of the Arab. But the promise of the British soon turned into a betrayal of the Arab cause when on November 21, 1917, the Balfour Declaration for the establishment of a Jewish home in Palestine was passed⁵. Later on, the Allied Supreme

2. Ibid.

3. Philip L. Groisser, *The United States and the Middle East*, (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1982), p. 65.

4. Ibid.

5. George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs, Fourth Edition* (Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 391.

Council allocated Palestine over to Great Britain and on July 22, 1922 Great Britain was formally confirmed as mandatory power by the Council of the League of Nations. "The mandate expressly provided for a Jewish national home in Palestine, incorporating into its text almost verbatim, the Balfour Declaration"⁶. While the mandatory power was charged with the responsibility of developing self-governing institutions, the mandate at the same time recognized the right of the Jewish agency to cooperate with the mandatory power in establishing a Jewish national home. It added that, "the zionist organization shall be recognized as such agency"⁷. Moreover, as per the article 6 power was conferred on Great Britain for facilitating Jewish immigration and land settlement ensuring at the same time that the rights and positions of other sections of the population were not prejudiced⁸.

Any historical phenomenon is to be understood in terms of an interplay of various factors taking place at that particular period of time. Thus, the British insidious diplomatic move to create a national home for the Jews was essentially a game played in view of its own interests and options, not foreseeing the grave consequences that the event would generate.

First, the British government under excessive pressure from the zionist movement that spread throughout the continent of Europe and the US in the early nineties had to acquiesce to Jewish demand for a separate homeland in Palestine. Even at the Paris peace conference there were zionist delegates both from Great Britain and the USA who propagated their cause on the floor strongly. It is relevant here to mention that zionism basing on the philosophy that all scattered Jews would return to zion (Palestine) as their homeland, grew into a powerful national movement ably supported

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

and financed by the Jewish communities living in Europe and the USA.⁹

Second, it appears that the British government tried to assume their policy of 'divide and rule' in running the new mandated territory. During the long period of repeated conquests, the social, economic and political development of Palestine remained increasingly neglected and the country virtually became an arid swampy wasteland with a declining population.¹⁰ Although the Jewish people comprised only 7% out of 700,000 Palestinians,¹¹ they were more enterprising and aggressive than the Arabs. Despite having numerical superiority over the Jews, the Arabs, on the other hand, were politically ill organized and economically in a nomadic stage. The British government perceiving it well that the human resources of Palestine were not so good as those in Sudan, Egypt or India, considered the Jewish community as an asset that could be conducive to its administration in the mandated territory. Moreover, the existing Jewish number was to be increased by Jewish immigration that would pour in Palestine a new generation of educated and enlightened people from the west. Their intellectualism, vigorous political, social and economic outlooks, therefore, would naturally contradict the traditional Arab values so as to precipitate an internal conflict between the Arabs and Jews. Thus, the British being politically, religiously and psychologically (Judaic-Christian affinity) attached to the Jews would be able to play conveniently the Jewish

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9. Ever since the dispersion of the Jews from Palestine (zion) to several scattered areas, the hope of a 'return' to their original homeland had always been nurtured by the Jews. With the passage of time it turned into a political movement with definite goal and policy, especially after 1886 when Dr. Theodor Herzl as the leading figure and founder of zionist movement gave zionism a definite political turn. See for details George Lenczowski, op. cit., pp. 388-391.
 10. Philip L. Groisser, op. cit., p. 66.
 11. Dr. Akmal Hossain, A Survey of the Palestinian Right of Self-determination (a thesis submitted to the Institute of State and Law, Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences, Prague. 1977).

card in their hand to extract the maximum benefits out of this schism.

Third, Great Britain being a predominant colonial power of that time always considered Near East (Middle East) as a region of vital political, strategic and commercial importance to her. With her sprawling network of colonies in Asia and Africa, some of the world's most strategic waterways including the Suez Canal and Dardanelles were of crucial importance to her in maintaining the colonial linkage through trade and commerce. Perhaps, it was well perceived by Great Britain that a homeland for the Jews in this region orchestrated by her would remain as a permanent protegee to serve her perennial political interests in this region. Besides, the Jewish state could act as a permanent outpost of the interests of other western countries in this region.

The developments marking the history of Palestine after its inception as a mandate should, perhaps, draw the attention of the analysts to arrive at an opinion on the issue without any bias or prejudice. These developments ran contrary to what was envisaged in the League Covenant for the British Government to carry out. The two primary objectives embodied in the Palestine mandate as its goals were (i) to give effect to the provision of article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations which spoke about the (a) well-being and development of the people of the mandated territory 'form a sacred trust of civilization' and (b) the existence of the people of Palestine as an independent nation was provisionally recognized and (ii) the Palestine mandate required that the mandatory power should be responsible for putting into effect the Balfour Declaration i.e. the creation of a 'national home', for Jewish people.¹²

As it appears, the British authorities remained indifferent to the first and basic objective of leading the country towards independence by the development of self-governing institutions. On the other

12. Ibid.

hand, it took few steps as a placatory prelude to the formation of Jewish national homeland in Palestine. In 1922 Britain divided the Palestine mandate into two parts: the larger part east of the Jordan river became the country of Transjordan (now Jordan) while the smaller part west of the Jordan river continued to be called Palestine. Concurrently with these developments, the British mandatory administration opened the portal of Palestine for the Jews to settle in this land without realizing that such Jewish migration would one day be a political dynamite in the Arab World.¹³

The steadily increasing Jewish immigration backed by financial aid from a number of Zionist organizations, soon gave birth to a new prosperous Jewish community in Palestine who could boast of their modern schools, hospitals and other institutions patterned on western model. With their background of western education and sophistication, the Jews got upper hand in the affairs of mandatory administration and their agency was given public and judicial functions. Besides, the agency was entrusted with duty to control immigration, education, agriculture and defense of Jewish inhabitants. It would not be out of relevance here to mention that many Jews were found to be more educated and intelligent than their British counterparts in Palestinian administration—a situation not experienced by Britain in any of her colonies. Therefore, Britain as mandatory power had to function in close co-operation with this Jewish community. On the other hand, the Arab community in Palestine presented a different picture. The Arabs were far from being as efficiently organized politically as were the Jews. Like the Jewish agency, there was no Arab equivalent. Although there were some political groups led by persons like Mufti and Raghib

13. In 1918, the population of Palestine was 700,000. Of these 56,000 were Jews. In 1922, Jewish population rose to 83,979 out of total 757,182, and in 1931 it rose to 174,610 out of total 1,035,821. Finally in the year 1946 the number increased to 608,230 out of the total population of 1,972,560. Cited in Dr. Akmal Hossain, op. cit.

Bey Nashashibi,¹⁴ Arab politics in general was characterized by fluidity and lack of unity and the absence of a common goal. The Arab community was also backward economically. Out of the total Arab population, 73% lived in rural areas with agriculture being the mainstay of their livelihood. Even the methods applied in agriculture were primitive. Only 25% of Moslem children attended schools in contrast to 100% of Jewish Youth.¹⁵ Besides, they were not blessed with outside aid and assistance like the Jews had been.

The divergent and asymmetrical socio-economic, political and religious outlooks of these two communities eventually had a divisive effect on the Palestinians society as a whole. As a result, the Palestinian society was soon polarized into two antagonistic camps—the Arabs and Jew that were later on dragged into a series of sporadic conflicts between themselves. The Arab involvement in such riots was a manifestation of their resentment against the British mandated administration. Such resentment was due to the probable reasons like :

First, the Arabs from the beginning demanded self-determination and insisted from the early 1920s upon the establishment of a democratic, parliamentary form of government. But to their dismay, the British mandatory administration in flagrant violation of the Covenant of the League of Nations turned the Arab demand into a sacrificial goat at the altar of Jewish interests.

Second, the Jewish immigration was vehemently opposed by the Arabs. As mentioned earlier, the influx of Jews into Palestine created a precarious balance of social force in the country. What appeared to be more ominous to the Arabs was the purchase of their lands and property by the Jews. Thus, as the number of Jews increased, Arab opposition to Jewish settlement was more intensified and anti-Jewish riots and attacks frequently occurred.

14. George Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 395.

15. Ibid.

Third, the British mandatory administration was biased in favour of the Jews who had an influential hand in the affairs of the country. In conformity with their opposition to Jewish immigration and a national homeland in Palestine, the Arabs from the beginning adopted a policy of non-cooperation with the mandatory regime. They also rejected an early British suggestion to create an Arab agency equivalent to the Jewish agency. Taking advantage of the vacuum created by Arab non-participation, the Jewish reaped all the benefits of the mandatory regime. Later on, with the explicit support of the British the Jews formed Zionist military squads under the name of sporting clubs and scout groups while the Arabs remained totally unarmed¹⁶.

The conflictive situation as arose in Palestine was marked by uncompromising and recriminatory attitudes of both the communities leading to some of the worst communal disturbances like the Wailing Wall of 1929 and Arab-Jewish riots in 1933.¹⁷ It should be noted here that beginning from the thirties Jewish immigration to Palestine started increasing at an alarming rate due to persecution of the Jews in Germany following Hitler's rise. This resulted in Jewish exodus on a large scale to Palestine. In 1935 the Jewish arrival accounted for over 60,000 people.¹⁸ The British remained unconcerned mainly on humanitarian ground to save the Jews from the Nazi persecution. However, at the same time it could not remain ignorant about the Arab's increasing resentment and grievances causing unrest in the country. The British efforts to restrict immigration were of no avail under mounting pressure from the Jews and their Zionist organizations in and out of Palestine.

16. The Haganah, a Jewish self-defense underground organization was established in 1920 to defend the Jews against Arab attacks and later more militant Jewish groups like the Irgun became active in responding to Arab reprisals. Cited in Philip L. Groisser, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

17. George Lenczowski, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

18. *Ibid.*

In fact, many Jewish underground groups fought this policy by organizing illegal immigration¹⁹.

The course of events ultimately took a different turn when in 1937 the Arabs revolted against the British administration openly expressing their resentment and agitation against the British government's failure to restrict immigration and its biased and prejudicial policy towards the administration. Although this was put on the western propaganda platform as an Arab campaign of terror and violence, but in essence it was, perhaps, the first indigenous Arab attempt to thwart an order imposed on them by an alien rule. The revolt lasted through 1939, nearly until the outbreak of World War II.

Standing between these two polarized communities, British mandatory government rendered its efforts towards a reconciliation between the Arabs and Jews. It may be noted that earlier the Shaw Commission in 1929, the Hope-Simpson Commission in 1930 and the Royal (Peel) Commission in 1936 tried to inquire about the actual state of affairs whenever any crisis erupted.²⁰ However, being confronted with a new resurgent Arab population, the British government practically abandoned the hope for a reconciliation between the Arab and Jews. Later on, the British plan of partitioning Palestine²¹ into Arab and Jewish states envisaged by the Royal Commission in 1937 turned into another political dynamite in the region and failed to appease neither the Arabs nor the Jews. While it was natural for the Arabs not to part with their territory any more as a vast chunk of Palestinian territory was already lost due to the formation of Transjordan, the Jews on the other hand reacted sharply against the plan viewing it as a violation of the precise terms of Balfour Declaration which sought to establish a Jewish state in the total area of Palestine.

19. Philip L. Groisser, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

20. George Lenczowski, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

21. *Ibid.*

Subsequent to the above development, two events worth noting in the thirties concerning the Palestinian issue were the London Conference of March 1939 and the White Paper issued by the British government in May 1939.²² Although the Conference produced no agreement between the Arabs and Jews on the status of Palestine, but the participation of other surrounding Arab countries like Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Transjordan added a new novelty to the Conference. However, the irony of the fact remains that there was no true Palestinian participation in the Conference. After much wrangling, the British government succeeded in securing few representatives of Palestine who were released from their exile in Seychelles.²³ As it appears, the Conference wanted to give credence to the partition plan earlier rejected by both the Arabs and Jews. Once again their reiteration to respective formula virtually made the Conference ineffective that ended without producing any agreement. On the other hand, the White Paper seemed to reflect a reversal of British earlier policy of partition. The government proposed the creation within ten years of an independent Palestinian state to be linked with Britain by a special treaty. The most important provisions concerned immigration and land transfer. On both points, Britain met Arab demands by limiting Jewish immigration to 75,000 for the next five years after which it was to cease altogether. "Palestine was to be divided into three zones—the first in which land transfers from Arabs to Jews were to be allowed, the second in which they were to be restricted, and the third in which they are to be forbidden"²⁴.

It is interesting to note that despite some sorts of concessions given to the Arabs by the White Paper, they remained skeptical about the actual British motive towards Palestine. The creation of an independent state linked with Britain by a special treaty, an

22. Ibid., p. 397.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., p. 398.

absence of a promise for a total ban on Jewish immigration, allowance for land transfers from Arabs to Jews seemed to make the British efforts somewhat amorphous in the Palestinian eye. However, the reaction to this paper varied among the leaders in Palestine and the other countries of West Asia. Some declared it unacceptable, others protested against it and "only a minority of the Arab political leaders regarded the White Paper as an acceptable compromise".²⁵ On the other hand, the reaction of the Jews to the Paper had been one of sharp and profound indignation throughout the Jewish world. To them the White Paper appeared to be a betrayal of promise and an attempt to appease the Arabs. Even the Permanent Mandates Commission of the League of Nations sharply criticized the Paper declaring that an incompatibility existed between the Paper and the terms of the mandate.²⁶

With no practical solution to the Arab-Jewish problem in sight, the political situation in Palestine on the eve of World War II remained extremely tense and finally when the world approached its second great convulsion in September 1939, Great Britain standing between the two antagonistic groups had to pursue a policy in the region in the light of many new predicaments and opportunities. During the continuation of World War II, the British government had to face a myriad of intermittent problems in Palestine.

First, Nazi and fascist propaganda which had won some support among the members of ruling classes in Egypt and several Arab countries also had its fallout on the Palestinian population. A large number of Arab Palestinians was greatly influenced by such propaganda and was even ready to seek aid from the Nazis in liberating Palestine from the British domain. This was of alarming concern to the British as the Jews who were embittered by the White Paper in 1939 also possessed an ill will towards the British government.

25. William Yale, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

26. George Lenczowski, *op. cit.*, p. 398.

Second, ever since the proclamation of Whiter Paper in 1939, the most extremist Jewish elements lost their patience and resorted to violence with a view to compelling Britain to ease the immigration laws. The Jews had now two calculations in their mind, the withdrawal of British from Palestine and the evacuation of Arabs from the lands where they could settle the new immigrants. Thus, during the war the British experienced increasing Jewish terrorist attacks on their administrative and military establishments.²⁷ A dangerous Jewish subversive movement developed during World War II against the British giving rise to a Jewish insurrection in Palestine. The complexity of the situation was further compounded by a wave of illegal Jewish immigration mostly from Nazi occupied Europe. There were even instances of Jewish terrorist groups fighting with the British soldiers whenever the latter intercepted the illegal unloading of immigrants from ship. Taking advantage of Britain's war-time predicaments the Jews also yielded pressure on the British government to accede to their demand for an independent brigade in 1944, although in the beginning the British government was unwilling to sponsor any such Jewish formation.

Third, during the war the British government was under heavy pressure exerted by the American zionists for creating a Jewish state at the earliest possible time. In this connection, perhaps, the Biltmore programme of 1942 led by the American zionist organization should not go unnoticed. In its objectives, the programme went further than did the Balfour Declaration calling for (i) the establishment of a Jewish state which would embrace the whole of Palestine (ii) the creation of a Jewish army (iii) the repudiation of the White Paper of 1939 (iv) unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine which would be controlled not by the British but by the Jewish agency.²⁸

It is important to observe here that by implicating the US zionist interests in Palestine with greater force the Jews in Palestine began

27. Dr. Akmal Hossain, op. cit.

28. George Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 399.

to gain confidence and reliability in their conviction for a homeland in Palestine. This also indicated an important trend that the Jews would no longer rely upon Britain and that any policy of moderation would act as an impediment to the quick achievement of the Zionist demand.

It would, perhaps, be wrong to suppose that the US support to the Jews was an anathema to British government. It was rather a new opportunity for Britain as the US government took direct interests in the Palestine issue on behalf of the Jews. It may be relevant here to mention that in 1945 the US President backed by Congress urged the immediate admission of 100,000 Jews to Palestine. Both houses of Congress adopted a resolution urging the opening of Palestine to Jewish immigration.²⁷ The British government, heavily dependent on the US support during the war did not even protest this move.

As it appears, Britain's failure to check illegal Jewish immigration during World War II, its vulnerability to US Zionist pressure, its susceptibility to Arab rebellion inside, its lack of efforts to contain Jewish intransigence and above all its war time and colonial burdens ultimately placed the British government in a perilous situation to cope with the mounting Arab-Jewish friction and growing resistance to their rule. Thus, after the war, Britain decided to give up their Palestine mandate and turned the problem over to the United Nations. After a long deliberation the UN Special Commission submitted a report containing two plans. One of these the minority plan proposed for (i) the termination of the mandate (ii) the partition of the country into a Jewish and an Arab state (iii) administration of Jerusalem by the UN on the basis of international status. The plan also envisioned an economic union between these two states. The minority plan, on the other hand, proposed for (i) termination of the mandate (ii) the establishment

29. Philip L. Groisser, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

of a federal state consisting of Jewish and an Arab state with Jerusalem as its capital.³⁰

The Zionists favoured the first option and used all means of maneuvering to get it implemented. In this connection, they were helped by the government of US when President Truman used his personal and official influence to secure a favourable vote for partition. As a result, the General Assembly approved a resolution incorporating the partition plan on November 29, 1947 by a vote of 33 to 13 with 10 abstention. The proposed Jewish state was to constitute 56.47 percent and the Arab state only 42.88 percent of the total area of 26,323 square kilometers. Jerusalem as an international zone was to get about 0.65 percent. This entitled the Jews to nearly two thirds of the country who constituted only less than one third of the population of Palestine occupying 6% of the total land before.³¹

The partition plan was vehemently opposed by the Arabs and the US policy in this connection was seriously criticized by them as the US pressure and influence helped to rally enough votes for the partition. They reproached American Presidents, Roosevelt and Truman for their failure to keep promises to the effect that no basic decision on Palestine would ever be taken without the agreement of both parties directly concerned. It seems that the US played its new role in Palestine out of many considerations.

First, in the aftermath of World War II the US came out of its shell of isolationism and became a global power with high military and economic potency to compete for spheres of influence in several vital regions of the world. In this connection, the fluidity of Palestinian political development gave her an unique opportunity to exploit the situation to her advantage. As indicated earlier, the Zionists in the US had always been keeping Britain under pressure for creating a Jewish national homeland in Palestine. After the

30. Dr. Akmal Hossain, op. cit.

31. Ibid.

war, the British mantle had been taken over by the US whose policy was in conformity with the hopes and aspirations of Jews living both in Palestine and in the US. At home, the Zionist lobby had an all pervasive influence over the course of US politics. The famous Marshall plan aimed at rescuing the western allies from economic collapse was believed to be the brain child of the Jewish industrialists, bankers and entrepreneurs. Under such circumstances, the US government, perhaps, could not remain indifferent to the interests of the Zionists.

Second, with the decline of British and French power following World War II, the US opted for a direct involvement in the Middle East in view of certain considerations which are as follows :

- (i) Preservation of strategic access to the middle East and its oil resources.
- (ii) To check Russian expansion into the area.
- (iii) Good relations with conservative Arab states who were believed to be pro-west in political outlook.
- (iv) Preservation of peace and stability in the area.

Thus, it was conceived that a new homeland for the Jews would remain as a permanent outpost of US interests in the region where she would be able to maintain her influence directly. This would enable the new global strategy of the US to achieve many of the objectives it sought in such a vital and crucial strategic region of the globe.

The period which followed the partition plan was marked by terrorist attacks launched by both the Arabs and Jews on one another. The UN Security Council finally met in April 1948 to consider the deteriorating situation.³² Realizing the gravity of the situation, the US government at one time proposed to suspend the partition plan calling for a Special Session of the General Assembly to work out a new solution. The US role, however, appeared to

32. Ibid.

be contradictory when at the same time it proposed the placing of Palestine under the UN Trusteeship Council until such time a government approved by both the Arabs and Jews was established in Palestine.³³ But the Jews opposed the plan totally and as a result the Special Session of the General Assembly on May 14, 1948 passed a second resolution appointing a mediator to find out a peaceful solution of the Palestine problem.³⁴

On the same day that the second UN resolution was passed, the British withdrew from Palestine relinquishing its duty as a mandatory power. Taking advantage of this political vacuum, the powerful Jewish National Council proclaimed the state of Israel on the same day with least regard to the decision of the General Assembly. Within minutes under President's direct instruction, the US recognized the new state of Israel and was, in fact, the first country to do so. This chain of events seemed to indicate one thing that there was probably a tripartite understanding between the Jewish Agency, the US and Great Britain about the creation of the new state of Israel.

With the creation of Israel, one chapter of Palestinian history ended and a new chapter began. The new phase of the Palestine problem witnessed some of the gravest consequences of Zionist aggressive design that constituted the main episodes in making the history of the Middle East a chequered and tragic one.

AN OVERVIEW OF ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICTS

This section of the paper is an attempt to glance through some of the conflicts taken place between Israel and few Arab states that had impact upon the regional politics to a great extent. The purpose is to search out a way along which the problem of Palestine had been traversing ever since the time Israel was created in this region. The most outright political fact that probably

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.

becomes discernible during this time is the placing of Arab-Israeli conflict at the apex of all political developments in this area. The problem now reached a new dimension with the direct involvement of Arab states to decide the destiny of the Palestinians. Since the creation of Israel in 1948 a state of war has existed between Israel and most of the Arab nations in the Middle East. While the issue of Israel's existence has been at the heart of the conflict, some other important consideration lay behind Arab opposition to Israel as a whole. The Arab countries have been particularly dismayed by decline in their political prestige following the defeat at the hand of Israel in 1948 war. Besides, Israel as a land of Jews was created with the support of the western powers. Thus in the eye of the Arab world, Israel was looked upon as a symbol of western colonialism whose culture and tradition sharply contradicted the traditional ideals and values of the Arab society in the region.

The first Arab-Israeli conflict of (1948-49) extended Israel's de facto boundaries which included the northern, western and southern parts of Palestine meaning that about three quarters of Palestine came under the authority of Israel. The remaining portion in Arab hands was divided between Egypt which set up an administration in Gaza strip between 1948 and 1967, and Jordan which annexed eastern Palestine and changed its name to West Bank i.e. the western part of the Jordan river.³⁵ Besides, the conflict also brought about alarming changes in socio-political and strategic situation in the Middle East.

First, the victory of a nascent state in the face of regular Arab army seemed to confirm the new might of Israel engineered by her higher morale, better equipment and superior organization.

Second, Israel was assisted by the western powers whose Jewish organizations exerted great influence on their governments to

35. Nasser H. Aruri, "Dialectics of Dispossession", in Nasser H. Aruri (ed), *Occupation: Israel over Palestine*, (London, Zed books Ltd. 1984), p. 6.

assist Israel in every possible way. This was further a proof that the west would always stand on the side of Israel ignoring the Arab cause per se.

Third, the war was marked by gruesome cruelties and violations of international law. "Scores of Arab villages deemed uninhabitable had been razed (by the Jews) as insurance against their owner's return. The Jews massacred all the Arab civilian population in the village of Deir Yassin in April 1948".³⁶

Fourth, the worst consequence of the conflict had been the displacement of several hundred thousand Arabs from Israel, most of these people turned into refugees and took shelter in the surrounding Arab countries.³⁷

However, the saddest legacy left over by the conflict was the disunity among the Arab countries. The Arabs who were defeated in the war due to poor morale of troops, weak leadership and political dissensions among them failed to foster a unified cooperative body to challenge the might of Israel from the beginning. Their perceptions of the Palestinian problem greatly differed among themselves. The rivalry between the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan and Egypt was a serious impediment on the way of dealing with the Palestinian issue seriously. In this connection it may be said that the Arab government's hasty decision to enter the war with Israel in May 1948 was more an outcome of their mutual suspicion of one another than a fraternal concern for the fate of their Arab brethren in Palestine.³⁸

36. George Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 409.

37. In the Spring of 1949, the number of Arab displaced persons eligible for relief was officially estimated at 940,000. At the beginning of the war, there were 1,320,000 Arabs and 640,000 Jews in Palestine. The establishment of Israel resulted in the displacement of nearly 70% of the Arab population, which the Israeli government refused to readmit. See for details George Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 410.

38. Rony Gabbay, "Israel and the Middle East", in Mohammed Ayub (ed), *The Middle East in World Politics*, (London, Croom Helm, 1981), p. 41.

While Egypt and Jordan became the beneficiaries of 1948 conflict, the uprooted Palestinians on the other hand, lived in squalid refugee camps experiencing bitterly the privations of camp life. The tragic exodus of the Palestinians following the war accelerated the destruction of traditional Palestinian society. Most of the Arabs became depesantised. The Palestinian consciousness in the UNRWA camp was ultimately dominated by the shared traumatic experiences of catastrophe, exodus, and diaspora.³⁹

The disenchanted and disgruntled Palestinians living in the refugee camps naturally had to look upon their Arab brethren in the neighbourhood as the only sources of support in their struggle for self-determination and independence. But what appears striking is the fact that Arab states were so much obsessed with their discordant ambitions in the region that the Palestinian question virtually remained in abeyance.

It should be noted that the Palestinians being a stock of the same Arab race always maintained a distinct identity of themselves despite their close religious, cultural, social and psychological affiliation with the Arab nations. Being dismayed by the inter-Arab squabbling they were quick in realizing that no Arab state would permit a Palestinian state to be shelved out from its territory nor would an assimilation with the host Arab nations be possible in future. Ultimately, the Palestinians were to address some of the crucial questions themselves like (i) What territories would form the state of Palestine? (ii) What would be the position of the Jewish settlers? (iii) What would be the diplomatic channel through which their voice be placed in the international fora? (iv) Finally and most importantly through what strategy and tactics these unarmed, untrained and dispersed Palestinians would defeat a powerful Israel in future?

The Palestinians living in the diaspora had no political guidance, and thus they were unable to evolve a common policy mainly due

39. Adrew Mack, "The PLO and the Prospects for Peace in Middle East", in Mohammed Ayub (ed), op. cit., p. 82.

to an absence of leadership to combat the insurmountable situation. On the other hand, the process of Jewish colonization began to consolidate the position of the original as well as the immigrated Jews in Israel who began to have secure existence economically, politically and militarily. Besides, Israel was massively armed with armaments mainly from France and Britain. Having won the war of 1948 with a vast chunk of Arab territory, Israel's basic aim had been to maintain the status quo, pacify and stabilize the whole region.

However, the situation in the Middle East attained a new pattern and trend with the rise of Gamal Abdul Nasser, president of Egypt (1956-70) as the champion of Arab Unity and Pan-Arabism⁴⁰. Nasser's political rise is attributed to a number of circumstantial factors, mainly the political scenario existing at that period of time. He, in particular, was inspired by the various nationalist movements in the Third World countries marked by anti-west feeling as well as rising expectations of the masses for an exploitation free society. Nasser could successfully cultivate the anti-west feelings of a number of Arab countries who were reactive to western domination of the region for a long time. Moreover, during the tense days of cold war following World War II, the politics of alliances and counter-alliances was an anathema to Nasser. At this critical juncture, Nasser gained tremendous popularity in the Arab world by advocating greater independence from western economic and political influence through a policy of non-alignment. Consequently, Israel was viewed as a colonial creation of the west, a political cancer that was to disrupt peace and stability in this region.

Nasser in his advocacy of Pan-Arabism, Arab unity and solidarity sought to control two movements first, the struggle for independence against the west and its regional supporters, second, the restoration of legitimate rights of the Palestinians. Nasser's preoccupation with Israel was instrumental in bringing Arab unity

40. Philip L. Groisser, op. cit., p. 110.

on the issue of opposition to Israel despite deep seated and serious disagreements among Arab nations and leaders on most issues. In his endeavour to stand on the side of the Palestinians, Nasser proposed for an economic boycott of Israel⁴¹. Furthermore, Egypt persisted in its policy of denying navigational right to Israel along the Suez canal and have access to the Gulf of Aqaba⁴². As a reaction to Israel's balance of armaments doctrine stipulated by the Tripartite Agreement among the U. S. Britain and France, Egypt embarked on a policy of massive rearmament with Soviet aid and assistance⁴³.

Coupled with all these developments that somehow precipitated a ray of hope among the Palestinians that Egypt is the sole country advocating their cause, continuous tensions on the Egyptian-Israeli borders punctuated by sporadic infiltrations, raids and counter-raids sometimes in an organized medium sized military scale deep into Israeli territory by Egyptian Commando unit called Fedayeen stirred the mind of the Arab refugees to adhere to the same tactics to harass the Israeli authorities⁴⁴. But so far as the activities of the Palestinians were concerned, their infiltrations were by the farmers or refugees who crossed the boundary to rejoin their relatives or to revisit their farm lands located on the other side of Gaze strip⁴⁵. Moreover, in most cases, there were Egyptian

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., p. 124.

43. The Israeli government advanced the doctrine of 'balance of armaments' as a guiding principle in the maintenance of peace in the region. In the name of this doctrine Israel appealed to Washington to allow her to purchase arms in the US. See for details George Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 426.

44. The term fedayeen, derived from the Arabic word feda or sacrifice, means man of sacrifice. It is used to refer to all Palestinian insurgents regardless of their organizational affiliation. Cited in Bard E. O' Neill, *Armed Struggle in Palestine : A Political-Military Analysis*, (Colorado, Westviesd Press, 1978), p. 6.

45. George Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 424.

restrictions on any armed infiltration into Israel by the Palestinians living in Gaza. At the same time such infiltrations were countered by Israeli reprisals with promptness.

The developments as discussed above soon strained the relations between Egypt and Israel and a growing animosity of fierce intensity became sharply visible when following the nationalization of the Suez canal company on 26 July 1956 there was a deterioration of the situation especially along the Egypt-Israel and Jordan-Israel Armistice demarcation lines⁴⁶. On 29 October 1956, Israel penetrated deeply into Egyptian territory in the Sinai peninsula in violation of the Armistice Agreement between Egypt and Israel and further extended its territory by annexing the Sinai peninsula from Egypt⁴⁷. This incident was a turning point in Egyptian-Israeli relations as Egypt which was a beneficiary of 1948 war now had to loose a significant portion of its territory in the hand of Israel. Since then containing Israel had been the cardinal aim of Egyptian policy.

So far as Egypt's policy towards Israel was concerned, Nasser stringently stood on the point that any compromise with Israel was incompatible with the removal of Israel as a political entity. His hard line policy towards Israel was manifested in several of his ideas floated during that time.

First, Nasser asserted that any war with Israel should be a final, decisive and brief war—an all out war to the bitter end⁴⁸. In this connection, all the Arab states were required to strengthen their respective position through internal reforms—political, economic and social.

Second, he stressed the need for greater Arab unity and a new realization to remain above inter-Arab rivalries as this would sap much of their potentialities and energies.

46. The need for convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, UN publication, New York, 1989.

47. Ibid.

48. Rony Gabbay, op. cit., p. 42.

Third, he asserted that until such a time a full-scale war against Israel is launched, the struggle would have to spill over such activities like economic warfare including boycott, closure of water passages, political and diplomatic isolation of Israel aimed at undermining Israel's relations with the Third World, psychological warfare through pressure, harassment across borders, guerrilla warfare including infiltration deep inside Israel, subversive activities and war of attrition.⁴⁹

What is, perhaps, important to extract from all these developments is the fact that Egypt under Nasser viewed its conflict with Israel from its own perspective by placing it at the centre of Arab politics during the late fifties and early sixties. No sincere efforts were rendered to uphold the cause of Palestine as a separate entity nor was any attempt made to create a leadership out of the dislocated Palestinians living in several Arab countries. While it is true that most Arab leaders promised to dismantle the Zionist state, in reality they seemed to pay lip service to the Palestinian cause leaving it simply into the backwaters of Arab politics. At the same time, the Palestinians also had their own predicament. Despite the flickering sense of Palestinian nationalism, a younger generation of leaders that appeared in diaspora in the 50s had to identify themselves with various ideological currents in the area, i. e. Nasserism, Bathism, Marxism etc. These conditions as William B. Quandt has noted "did little to foster a sense of purpose and unity among the Palestinian elite."⁵⁰

With the passage of time, an increasing realization among the Palestinians that the benign indifference of the Arab countries would not serve their cause, ultimately propelled them to adopt certain measure on their own. They initiated a number of guerrilla attacks, somehow ill organized in nature, into Israeli territory. Such Palestinian activities perplexed Nasser very much and he was

49. Ibid., p. 43.

50. Cited in Bard E. O'Neill, op. cit., p. 5.

haunted by one great fear that if the Palestinians are left to their own device, perhaps, his own country could be dragged into another war with Israel—a war he knew he could not win. A way had to be found out to neutralize the threat posed by the Palestinian underground activities, and the solution as envisaged was the establishment of a Palestine institution that would recognize Palestine as a separate entity. Finally Nasser convened the first Arab Summit meeting in 1964 which established the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestine Liberation Army.⁵¹ However, Nasser's initiative does not appear to be a wholehearted conviction for the cause of Palestine, it was rather like any historical phenomenon, an outcome of various factors.

First, Israeli threat to divert the waters of the River Jordan resulted in public criticism throughout the Arab world which later on compelled the Arab governments to convene the first Arab summit in Cairo.⁵² Nasser's probable calculation was that in case of a future war with Israel, the Palestinians could be used as pawns solely under his control. Thus, the Arab Summit was a convenient forum where atleast something could be done to placate the Palestinians.

Second, it was not only Nasser who was alone in fear. Many of the front line Arab states were apprehensive about the likely consequences of allowing the Palestinians a free hand to decide their destiny. Thus, they all connived at Nasser's scheme to create a Palestine organization that would work under Egyptian control.

Third, Nasser was extremely worried by the prospect of an alliance between the Palestinians and his rivals and enemies in Syria. It may be noted here that Nasser's initiative in inter-Arab unity suffered a set-back when the break-up of the union between Egypt and Syria took place in 1961 following Syria's suspicion and fear about Egypt's actual motive in the region.

51. Rony Gabbay, op. cit., p. 48.

52. World Focus, July-August 1987.

Lastly, the Palestinians who became disillusioned with the incapability of the Arab states to respond to their cause seemed to run out of patience. "It was the unrest of the Palestinians in the early sixties which moved the Arab governments into action".⁵³

The birth of PLO out of Egypt's womb was a factor that largely limited its claim to its autonomy. It was, in fact, heavily influenced by Egypt. As the PLO's main base of operation was the Gaza strip, Egypt wanted to keep the PLO on a short leash lest it cause problems with Israel at inopportune moment. Moreover, the PLO equipped with tanks and artillery had a conventional force structure which was somewhat anomalous for a contemporary liberation organization.⁵⁴ Consequently, there was a reaction against the low level insurgent activity of the PLO caused due to its linkage to Cairo and the conventional force structure. The PLO was being increasingly criticized by a number of Palestinian organizations as being insufficiently revolutionary.⁵⁵ As a result, inspired by the successful attack on Israel's national water carrier project with the Syrian support⁵⁶ the Palestinians resolved to act for themselves. This event marked the birth of Al-Fatah.

Besides exerting his influence on the course of PLO developments, Nasser also sought to influence the then prevailing Arab world with his proclaimed ideology of Nasserism. It may be mentioned here that his political thinking was based on certain precepts

53. Cited in Jamal R. Nassar, "The PLO and the Arab states", Asian Affairs, volume iii, No. iii, September 1981, pp. 306-307.

54. Bard E. O'Neill, op. cit., p. 5.

55. World Focus, July-August 1987.

56. By the early 1960s, Fatah was increasingly influenced by the ideas of the Algerian and Syrian nationalist left which provided organizational and military support. Thus, the Fatah's first military operation in January 1965 - an attack against Israel's national carrier project was launched with Syrian support. Cited in Aaron David Miller, "The PLO" in Robert O. Freedman (ed), *The Middle East Since Camp David*, (Boulder and London, Westview Press, 1984), p. 197.

like Arab nationalism, anti-colonialism and socialism. As it appears, his fervid antipathy towards the west inevitably resulted in his inclination towards the Soviet Union. Later on, the political scenario in the Arab world experienced a divisive trend when Nasser set up a bloc of progressive Arab states—comprising Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Algeria with the intention of undermining the position of the conservative Arab leaders of Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia.⁵⁷ This stance of Nasser had its ramification on the Palestinian movement. What probably Nasser wanted to show was that it was the radical and progressive regimes who were committed to the Palestinian cause, while the rest was indifferent to it. But in reality, no Arab country seemed to render its sincere tangible efforts to uphold the cause of the Palestinian people at the cost of its own interests.

In international relational events are significant so far as they create indelible political imprint on the actors that generate such events. Judged in this light, the third Arab-Israeli conflict of 1967 was, perhaps, the most important political development that brought about radical changes in the politico-strategic, social and economic configuration of the region.⁵⁸ The fundamental changes caused by the conflict of 1967 became a turning point in contemporary Middle East history on several accounts.

First, as a result of the war of 1967, Israel almost doubled its territory under control. It occupied the Golan Heights from Syria,

57. Rony Gabbay, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

58. In 1967 the UN withdrew its forces from Sinai deployed during 1956 crisis at Nasser's request despite Israeli protests. Egypt also announced it was closing the Gulf of Aqaba to Israel shipping by banning Israeli traffic through the straits of Tiran. Israel declared the blockade of its 'back door' an act of war. Fearful that if allowed to strike first the Arabs might inflict great damage with their Russian supported arms, Israeli forces simultaneously attacked Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian bases. In hostilities that lasted six days, Israel defeated the combined armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan. Cited in Philip L. Groisser, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

West Bank of the Jordan River from Jordan, Gaza strip from Egypt plus all of Sinai and the East Bank of the Suez canal. Besides, the old city of Jerusalem was annexed.

Second, the humiliating defeat of the Arab in the hands of Israel denigrated the image of the Arab world—particularly of Egypt which had so long been playing the pioneering role in Arab regional politics. "The Pan Arab dreams incarnated in particular by Nasser collapsed."⁵⁹

Third, the conflict was a pivotal incident in the history of the Palestinian people. So long the Palestinians had remained outside in scattered refugee camps, but with the occupation of West Bank and Gaza Strip, a significant percentage of the Palestinian population now came to live under direct Israeli occupation.

Fourth, Jordan and Syria (the former being the beneficiary of 1948 war) which so long remained unaffected by Israel's expansionist policy now fell prey to it. Consequently, they embarked on their respective policy to deal with Israel on their own calculation of interests and issues.

Fifth, as a result of the conflict, the strategy and tactics of the Palestinian movement attained a new dimension. "The receptivity to the notion of people's war was further increased by the spatial and demographic changes affecting the area which Israel controlled. Prior to the war, the idea of conducting a people's war in Israel relying on some 300,000 Arabs living amidst 2.5 million Jews seemed absurd. When the war ended, however, some one million Arabs found themselves under Israeli control and the potential area of operations had expanded to include the occupied territories as well as Israel. Consequently, some Arabs concluded that armed struggle in the form of guerrilla warfare and terrorism had become a more plausible course of action."⁶⁰

59. Alain Gresh, *The PLO : The Struggle within-Towards an Independent Palestinian State*, (London, Zed Books Ltd., 1983), p. 3.

60. Bard E. O'Neill, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

While many analysts tend to argue that following the 1967 war, the PLO movement attained a degree of independence in its course of action and broadened its sources of support, the fact remains that it still remained heavily dependent on the Arab World. The Arab states provided the majority of the PLO's financial resources and hosted the guerrillas. This time, Jordan became the front line state to act as the PLO's sanctuary.

It is still ironical that Jordan which from the outset was apathetic to the idea of a Palestine state neighbouring it now had to absorb heavily armed Palestinian Commando groups demonstratively patrolling the streets of its capital. In Jordan, the large degree of independence attained by the PLO enabled the Palestinians to create their own structure for social and political emancipation.⁶¹ As a result, the Royal regime of Jordan soon became disillusioned with the PLO. The reasons are probably, (i) the PLO movement went out of the control of King Hussein (ii) the King felt the radical activism of the PLO to be too ominous to throw his throne in danger.

As backlash against these developments, the King issued a decree in 1970 restricting commando activities and demanding the surrender of all arms and ammunition in possession of the Palestinian guerrillas. The PLO rejected such a decree. However, the resistance suffered its most humiliating defeat at the hands of King Hussein's troops in the 'Black September' Jordanian war of 1970.⁶²

The liquidation of the Palestinian resistance by the Jordanian regime was a bitter and bloody experience for the Palestinians.⁶³

61. Abdallah Frangi, *The PLO and Palestine*, (London, Zed Books Ltd., 1983), p. 115.

62. Andrew Mack, op. cit., p. 85.

63. The brutal repression on the Palestinians in the Black September 'Jordanian war' led thousands of Palestinian women and children killed with fedayeen powerless to help. The survivors were deeply shocked by the silence of world opinion, especially of Arab governments at the bloody massacre of

The PLO's honeymoon with Jordan was short lived and after being ejected from Jordan, the next base of PLO operation was in Lebanon. However, Lebanon was not a new sanctuary for the displaced Palestinians. It may be relevant here to mention that after their expulsion from Palestine following the 1948 war, many Palestinians took refuge in Lebanon, and there was a presence of guerrillas in significant number after 1968. The attempt of the Palestinian guerrillas to re-establish themselves in southern Lebanon adjoining Israeli border aroused serious concern in Israel. Consequently, there arose serious clashes between the guerrillas and the Lebanese army as the latter had to counter sporadic Israeli attacks on Lebanon. Later on, the Egyptian mediation led to signing of the Cairo agreement on November 3, 1969 by the PLO and the Lebanese government. The Cairo agreement seemed to have given the PLO a greater freedom of movement and the Palestinian camps were practically placed under the control of the movement.⁶⁴ Besides, the PLO being aware of its past mistakes and errors in Jordan were restrained in their policy to avoid any confrontation with the Lebanese authorities. The democratic atmosphere in Lebanon unlike Jordan gave the PLO unique opportunity for considerable political activity. Beirut was more cosmopolitan and enlightened than the Jordanian capital of Amman, and here the PLO established many international connection and

fedayeen in Jarash and Ajlun.....Many Palestinians were reminded of the Israeli massacres at Kafr Kassem and Deir Yassin. They could note no difference between the actions of the Jordanian government and those of the Israelis. See for details, Abdallah Frangi, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-122).

64. "The Cairo Agreement gave the PLO responsibility for Palestinians in the refugee camps. the right to establish armed posts within the camps, and the right to free movement in the border area. In return, the PLO was to control the actions of all its commandoes to insure their non-interference in Lebanese affairs. Under the terms of the agreement Palestine commandoes were to occupy certain areas near the Israeli border as bases for training and posts to launch military operations". Cited in Jamal R. Nassar' *op. cit.*, p. 317.

contacts.⁶⁵ However, it should be noted here that the internal political situation in Lebanon had always been a turbulent one characterized by the bitter confrontation between the Muslims and the Christians. The cleavage between Christians and Muslims and their sectarian subdivisions was due to both political and economic reasons. The social, political and economic disparities among the different classes of Lebanese society became so severe that the society was virtually polarized into two distinct antagonistic camps and by 1975 Lebanon was on the brink a civil war. This turbulent situation had a negative effect on the PLO as the Christians viewed the PLO presence to be in favour of the Muslim interests in the country.⁶⁶

Before the outbreak of Lebanese civil war, another conflict erupted between the Arabs and Israel in 1973 when Egyptian forces in the Suez canal sector and the Syrian forces in the Golan Heights attacked Israeli positions.⁶⁷ The aim of a surprise attack on Israel was not to do anything in connection with the Palestinian aims and objectives, but ostensibly to regain their lost territory. Although the Arabs did not win the war decisively, nonetheless, some significant results were there for the Arabs.

First, the success of the initial Egyptian and Syrian strikes resulting in huge Israeli casualties created a new feeling among the Arabs that they were overcoming the technological deficiency in the face of Israel's technological supremacy.⁶⁸

Second, the Arab states appeared to have regained their lost confidence and overcome the humiliation and shame caused by the war of 1967.

65. Abdallah Frangi, op. cit., p. 125.

66. Jamal R. Nasser, op. cit., p. 320.

67. The need for convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, UN publication, 1989.

68. Philip L. Groisser, op. cit., p. 129.

Third, an important factor that contributed to renewed Arab self-confidence was the realization that Arab oil could be used as an economic and political weapon effectively.⁶⁹

All these results had some positive effect on the Palestinian movement as it achieved some diplomatic successes in the aftermath of the 1973 conflict. This will be indicated in section three of the paper. However, following the 1973 conflict the Egyptian attempt to reach a peaceful settlement with Israel in the seventies had its gravest consequences for the Palestinian movement. This angered the Syrian leadership which felt completely isolated in the Arab world with Jordan and Egypt remaining behind the curtain of Arab-Israeli problem.

At this critical juncture in Arab politics, the civil war in Lebanon ushered in as a boon for Syria to assert herself in the regional politics. The Syrian presence in Lebanon as Arab Deterrent Force gave her a convenient hand to influence the Palestinian movement physically.⁷⁰ As it appears, throughout the 1970s the Syrians continued to play the dominant Arab role in Palestinian resistance politics emerging as the PLO's true and sincere defender. But such Syrian stance is not without her own considerations.

First, the Syrian support to Palestine was intended to control Palestinian activities against Israel. In this connection, it may be mentioned that from the beginning Palestinian presence in Lebanon and their guerrilla activities generated a feeling of fear and anxiety in the Syrian mind for a possible Israeli reprisal which could amount to invasion of Lebanon by Israel. Such invasion would make the western flank of Syria vulnerable to Israel's attempt in encircling the Syrian army on the Golan Heights.

69. Ibid.

70. The Syrian peace keeping role in the Lebanon was guided by its own perception of security vis-a-vis Israel—particularly its fear for Israel. See for details Jamal R. Nassar, op. cit. p. 321-322.

Second, much of the material and political assistance was rendered to its own brand of Palestinian group—Saiqa, created in 1968 under Syrian tutelage.⁷¹

Third, Syria could use the Palestinians as pawns against its Lebanese rivals.

Lastly, Syria took advantage of a political vacuum then existing in the Arab world to face Israel. With Egypt virtually ostracized from the Arab world (following Sadat's trip to Jerusalem) it was Syria which was determined to play a prominent role in Arab politics, although at an enormous price. The loss of Egypt compelled the PLO to depend on Syria and the Syrian influence over the PLO was to ensure her voice in inter-Arab decisions that would, in future, attest her own interests in any possible resolution of Arab-Israeli conflict.

Remaining on the anvil of Syrian dominance with the hammer of Zionist policy on, the Palestinian movement seemed to have been stripped of its independence in its third safest sanctuary. Nevertheless, the base of operation remained intact until 1982 when Lebanon was invaded by Israel.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon placed the PLO at a critical juncture in its history. The loss of an independent base contiguous to Israel appeared to be a stumbling blow to the Palestinian resistance movement. Besides, the Palestinians realized that the degree of political and military freedom that the PLO enjoyed in Lebanon could not possibly be replicated in any other part of the region.⁷²

However, it is to be noted that the invasion generated increasing support for the Palestinian cause and closely identified the PLO with a solution to the Palestinian cause. The cataclysmic experience of the invasion despite having its negative effect on the cohesion, unity and viability of the PLO movement, added a new dimension to the

71. Aaron David Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

72. Emile F. Sahliyah, *The PLO After the Lebanon War*, (Boulder and London, Westview Press, 1986), p. 87.

Palestinian resistance movement which from now on had to face a myriad of challenges and risks in chalking out a definite path along which the Palestinian movement was to make its new journey with incertitude.

The foregoing analysis was an attempt to show how the Palestinians and their movement passed through different phases of Arab-politics. As revealed by facts, three important trends can be discernible from the analysis.

First, the Palestine resistance movement had always remained externally based with very little connection with the people living under Israeli rule in the occupied territories.

Second, the Arab countries greatly motivated by their respective self-interest kept the issue of Palestinian right of self-determination at bay. They seemed to lack a wholehearted conviction that the uprooted Palestinians be restored to their original homeland. Their involvement in conflicts and wars with Isreal was essentially a product of their own choice made in the light of their own interests. Thus, the political characteristic of the region seemed to remain essentially an Arab-Israeli conflict in its essence.

Third, although the inter-Arab tensions have given the PLO a room to maneuver, such squabbling mostly narrowed the movement's options.

THE PLO AND THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

As described in the preceding sections, the dismantlement and dispersion of the Palestinians from their homeland since 1948 violated the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people that clashed with the political ethics of modern age. Consequently, such gruesome affairs were bound to inspire the resistance movement of the Palestinians. At the same time, the international community viewed with repugnance the continued Israeli act of oppression on the Palestinian masses, and was sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, atleast outwardly.

But the wide discrepancy between what the Palestinians and the Israelis demanded respectively, virtually frustrated the peace efforts of various quarters to resolve the crisis amicably. As a result, it was the Palestinian movement that faced the dilemma and not the Israelis who after having consolidated their position in the total area of Palestine could atleast afford to digest the indignation and criticism expressed against her in various world forums. Perhaps, it would, also be safe to say that the most important peace plans drawn so far could hardly touch the main crux of the Palestinian problem and remained far short of what the Palestinians really demanded. As it appears, the balancing role of the various peace efforts did not, in any way, affect the Israel's strong position, and even if they did, they could easily be flouted by Israel with might under prodding from her supporters. Thus, the protracted movement of the Palestinians could rarely deal with the Zionist Israel from a position of strength. The movement continued to remain divided within its own ranks and was exploited by the Arab states. Besides, it lacked reliable great power support and remained physically separated from the overwhelmingly majority of the supporters in the occupied areas under Israel. Against all these odds, the movement under Yasser Arafat had to act in the light of several intractable political developments and realities that came in different form and shape at different points of time in the Middle East.

An attempt will be made in this section to delve into an important issue as how the Palestinian resistance movement was carried out under the leadership of its most celebrated leader, Yasser Arafat. This will bring into discussion some of the important peace efforts that have been rendered so far to meet up the Palestinian demand. Besides, Israel's attitude and policy towards the Palestinian will be dealt with. Although these are interwoven events and have taken place in between the series of developments discussed in the preceding sections, a separate section needs to be apportioned for it.

It may be mentioned here that when the PLO was founded in 1964, Ahmed Shukairy was its leader who had to act in accordance with the Palestinian mood that 'liberation and return' were the fundamental precepts on which the movement would not make a slightest compromise. As indicated earlier, the PLO was formed under the influence of Arab states who being embroiled in their own power rivalry wanted to use the forum to project Arab nationalism, rather than Palestinian nationalism and more precisely to use it as an instrument for influencing Pan-Arab politics. Although Ahmed Shukairy, a Nasser's favourite is credited with drafting the Palestinian National Charter and for the first time formulated the ideas of Palestinian identity and the Basic Law,⁷³ nevertheless, much to the dismay of the Palestinians there was no reference to any sovereignty either of the Palestinian people or of Palestinian state in the charter. The stress was laid on the definition of Palestine as an Arab homeland bound by ties of nationalism to the other Arab countries which together with Palestine constitute the greater homeland.⁷⁴ At this stage, the PLO's aim and strategy somehow remained shrouded in mystery and the movement lacked a concrete and planned course of action to meet up the challenge posed by Israel. What the world seemed to derive from Shukairy's vague rhetoric and verbosity is that he wanted to drive Israel into the sea.⁷⁵ Although, his militant and fiery rhetorics were at the back of increasing military activity by the Al-Fatah group, the PLO under Shukairy had, in fact, nothing significant to offer to the Palestinian masses.

The advent of Yasser Arafat to PLO movement as its chairman in February 1969 was preceded by certain developments that kept his movement floating in the ocean of Arab politics. The developments can be summarized as such:

73. Abdallah Frangi, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

74. Alain Grash, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

75. Abdallah Frangi, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

First, following the defeat of Arabs in the the Six-day war a demise of Nasserism took place, as a result of which the Palestinians lost faith in Pan-Arabism. This facilitated the way for the PLO movement to come out of the orbit of Egypt and veer its direction in an independent manner.

Second, the battle of Karamah (Jordan) in March 1968 was the political and military turning point in the resistance movement.⁷⁶ There was now more aid and assistance to the resistance movement.

Third, a new political idea about a secular and democratic state began to germinate in the Palestinian mind which gained sufficient support on the agenda of their highest policy making body—the Palestine National Council in 1968.

The most serious negative development that preceded Arafat's assumption of PLO leadership was the occupation of West Bank and Gaza by Israel. This was very much a discomfoting factor to Arafat and he was quick to realize it well that while a protracted people's war against Israel would have a popular base in the diaspora, it would lack one where it was most needed—in Israel itself. Thus, at the initial stage, the exploitation of the masses under occupation for the purpose of his movement, somewhat appeared to be an illusion only.

Second, the PLO movement began to experience a divisive trend within its structure. Arafat had to take notice of the fact that personal and ideological rivalries coupled with transgroup loyalties started creeping into the movement. Groups like PLFP and DFLP were born as independent organizations with revolutionary and internationalist outlooks that contradicted Fatah's

76. In the early morning of 21 March 1968, Israel army armed with heavy tanks and helicopter units mounted a surprise attack on the Palestinian commandos in Karamah (Jordan) to eliminate the guerrillas in few hours. However, this objective could not be accomplished as the Palestinian guerrillas retaliated the surprise attack with valour and courage breaking the aura of invincibility of the Israeli army. See for details Abdallah Frangi, op. cit., pp. 110-112.

more conservative nationalism.⁷⁷ Besides, other groups like Saiqa and ALF (Arab Liberation Front) were controlled subsidiaries of the Syrian and Iraqi regimes which acted as obstacles on the Fatah's efforts to unify and dominate the PLO and to shape its policies.⁷⁸

Third, on the international plank, the Six-day war and the subsequent cease-fire followed by the UN Security Council resolution 242 did have little positive impact on the Palestine issue.⁷⁹ To the utter disillusionment and frustration of the Palestinians, their rights were not mentioned in such a significant resolution of the United Nations Security Council. The Palestinians were simply referred to indirectly as 'refugees' not to speak of their right of self-determination. This obviously denigrated the image of the Palestinians and their resistance movement in the eyes of the world.

Amidst such a situation, Arafat had to direct the PLO movement with new strategy and tactics in order to propagate the cause of his struggle in the world arena. To this end, he seemed to resort to two means—the intensification of guerrilla activities and vigorous diplomatic maneuver to cultivate world support for the Palestinian cause. It would, perhaps, be not out of relevance to mention here that in the realization of the former, the Palestinians resorted to terrorism and multifarious violent acts against Israelis

77. The Popular Front for the liberation of Palestine (PFLP) was founded in 1967 which laid stress on people's war but also, and above all, on the Arab dimension of the struggle. The PFLP has been Fatah's main rival opposing Arafat on many political issues from time to time. On the other hand, Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) was born out of a leftist breakaway from the PFLP. It proclaims itself Marxist-Leninist, denounces the petty bourgeois Arab regimes and calls for the strengthening of cooperation between the PLO and the socialist countries. See for details, Alain Gresh, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-255.

78. Aaron David Miller, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

79. See for details, the need for convening an International Peace Conference on the Middle East, UN publication, 1989.

on several occasions. But the fact should be borne in mind that it was their only instrument—a weapon of the weak to fight the people with regular armies. At the same time, Israel's reprisal against such terrorist acts was more indiscriminate and cruel than those of the Palestinian acts.⁸⁰ While the sporadic armed guerrilla activities of the Palestinians did have little material impact on the military capability of Israel, they did have their weightage on the psychology of Israel as a whole. Besides, such guerrilla activities yielded a positive result for the Palestinian movement in one important respect. Before such armed struggle, the Palestine issue remained politically invisible and excluded from all agreements and negotiations. But now the international opinion could not ignore the resistance movement of the Palestinians with indifference. Particularly, in the west where Palestinian armed activities found expression in the form of their revulsion and condemnation against such acts, later on, brought to light Palestinian ability to de-stabilize an already unstable region which was of significant strategic and economic importance to the west.

The revolutionary zeal of the PLO movement rose to crescendo due to some of the diplomatic gains that it achieved during the mid 1970s. Arafat's unshakable conviction to the case of Palestinians, his dual strategy of armed struggle and diplomacy and above all his charismatic personality boosted up the resistance movement, and in no time the issue was brought to the very center of the Middle East conflict.

It is relevant here to mention that some of the events following the Arab-Israeli war of October 1973 and the Geneva Peace Conference became pivotal in many ways for the Palestinian people.

80. "Like most terrorist campaigns Palestine terror has frequently been indiscriminate. Israeli counter terror has equally been indiscriminate and has created far more victims. For example, more than 200 Palestinians died in Israeli reprisal raids for the 13 athletes killed at the Munich Olympics". Cited in Andrew Mack, op. cit., p. 85.

Most notably there was a considerable advancement in the status of the PLO when the Arab Summit (Rabat) in October 1974 unanimously adopted a five point resolution affirming the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to its own homeland and recognizing the PLO as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.⁸¹ Such recognition of the Palestinian status was further elevated to a position of diplomatic honour when on November 1974 the UN General Assembly through its resolution 3236 recognized the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, independence and sovereignty along with the right to return to its home and property. By the same resolution, the Assembly conferred on the PLO the status of observer, inviting the "organization to participate in the sessions and the work of the General Assembly and all other international conferences convened under the auspices of the Assembly and other organs of the UN."⁸²

The achievement of diplomatic victory by Yasser Arafat led to his involvement in intense political activities in the mid 70s. He was, however, careful to notice that no sign of compromise or flexibility from Israel was in the sight. Moreover, whatever successes he achieved so far would take long time to bear the final fruit for the Palestinians. At this stage his utmost concern was to influence Israeli leadership through a diplomacy of moderation much to the disliking of various radical leaders within the PLO. This was because in the mid 70s Arafat faced a nuclear Israel and thus any hope of defeating Israel through a long protracted Palestinian armed struggle seemed to appear as an illusion only.

At the diplomatic front, the idea of a democratic, progressive and non-sectarian Palestine which predated the arrival of Arafat into

81. The need for convening the International Peace Conference on the Middle East, UN publication, 1989. Also see for details, Abdallah Farangi, op. cit., p. 142-143.

82. Ibid.

the movement and later on adhered to it by Arafat, was totally rejected by Israel terming it as a Palestinian ploy to gain world sympathy. Later on, a mini-state proposal envisaging the creation of an independent combatant national authority over every part of Palestine that is liberated was vehemently opposed by Israel on the ground that its borders would be turned into a base of Palestinian terrorist activities. It is needless to mention here that such a proposal of Arafat was also rejected by the PFLP and DFLP leaders terming it as a 'capitulationist' and 'rejectionist' idea.⁸³ Lastly, a great shift was discernible in Arafat's diplomacy when his organization advocated for a two state solution—a partition of what was mandatory Palestine into a Palestinian Arab and an Israeli Jewish state. Realism dictated Arafat to compromise further on his two state formula as instead of demanding the UN partition plan boundaries of 1947 as a site for the Palestinians, he now opted for a Palestinian state in the occupied Gaza and West Bank.⁸⁴ This proposal met with strong resistance from his radical colleagues arguing for a return to the UN partition plan of 1947.

However, the irony of the fact remains that the Palestinian policy of moderation, flexibility and concessions could not fare well in the face of Israel's implacable arrogant and intransigent attitudes. Once again Israel emphatically stressed that it could under no circumstances, countenance ceding the West Bank and Gaza to an organization which she considered as a mere group of terrorists.

Thus, being unable to tackle Israel by his own diplomatic maneuver, the PLO tried to enlist support of the US, Israel's patron. In this connection, a peace programme enlisting some additional points was floated by the movement. *First*, it was mentioned that the armed struggle would cease if Israel recognizes Palestinian sovereignty in the occupied territories. *Second*, the proposed state will not be a Soviet military base. *Third*, there was an indication

83. Andrew Mack, op. cit., p. 89.

84. Ibid., 90.

to change the controversial Palestine charter once the Palestinians gained their primary rights (a national independent state).⁸⁵

Excepting the US pressure on Israel to limit its settlements in the occupied territories, no tangible effort was rendered by the US administration to bring reconciliation between the two conflicting parties. The US position was that the PLO had to recognize Israel first as a precondition for any talk with either Israel or the US—a proposition that was totally unacceptable to the PLO. At this critical stage, Arab politics was further complicated by the US efforts to bring a reconciliation between Egypt and Israel through the controversial treaty of Camp David. While Egypt had her own compulsions for such a treaty, for the Palestinians it was no more than a betrayal of their cause. It may be relevant here to mention some of the immediate effects that the treaty had generated.

First, as a result of Camp David agreement and the peace treaty with Egypt, Israel received Egyptian recognition—the first from any Arab country.

Second, the agreement generated new confidence in Israel that she had no preponderant enemy in the region and thus could pay little attention to the stance of other Arab countries on many issues, in particular the Palestine issue.

Third, as a result of the Camp David agreement Israel succeeded in ostracizing Egypt from the rest of the Arab world. This placed her under no compelling Arab pressure to make an overall peace to relinquish her claims over the areas occupied in 1967.

On the other hand, for the Palestinians the Camp David agreement yielded some of the most frustrating results. As per the agreement, the framework for peace in the Middle East set forth general principles for the establishment of self-government for the Palestinians in the West Bank of the Jordan river and the Gaza strip over a period of five years. The framework for the conclusion

85. Ibid., 91.

of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel established guiding principles for the signing of a peace treaty between the two countries, for Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai and return of that area to Egypt.⁸⁶ Thus, the accords promised the return of Sinai to Egypt paying lip service to the crucial issues like the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied areas and the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people. The so-called autonomy and self-rule as envisaged in the accords fell far short of Palestinian expectation for a separate homeland for which they had been struggling so far. Consequently, the peace plan offered by the Camp David was rejected almost verbatim by Arafat and his followers. It may be noted here that although Egyptian role has been looked upon by the PLO with doubt and suspicion for reasons like Egyptian attempt to influence the PLO movement, its acceptance of the Rogers' plan,⁸⁷ and Sinai disengagement agreement⁸⁸ which were visible indicators of Egypt's self-motivated interests, nonetheless, Arafat viewed Egypt atleast psychologically a valuable ally and counter-weight to Syrian influence within the PLO. But as result of the accord, the Egyptian front became almost permanently frozen and a serious rift took place between the PLO and Egyptian leadership.⁸⁹

Some of the events that followed the Camp David accord seemed to keep the Palestinian problem stalemated politically, The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the war of attrition between Iran

86. Philip L. Groisser, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

87. As per the Rogers Plan, the US was to encourage the Arabs to accept a permanent peace based on a binding agreement and to urge the Israelis to withdraw from occupied territories when their territorial integrity is assured as envisaged in the SC resolution. However, negotiations on Rogers Plan made little headway since Israel in particular was unwilling to discuss a return to its 1967 borders without concrete measures to ensure its security. See for details, Philip L. Groisser, *op. cit.*, p. 199-200.

88. The Sinai disengagement agreement has two phases—Sinai 1 signed in 1974 and Sinai 11 signed in 1975. See for details, Philip L. Groisser, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

89. Jamal R. Nassar, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

and Iraq in the Gulf were some of the developments with far reaching politico-security and economic implications for this volatile and politically fluid region. Consequently, the problem of Palestine remained at its low ebb with attention of the world drawn on newly erupted crises as mentioned.

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 seemed to bring the issue of Palestine once again to the forefront of Arab politics and unfolded many new realities that Arafat had to accept. With the loss of its independent base for political and military operation in Lebanon and the lack of Arab interest to defend the Palestinian interests as demonstrated in the Lebanon war, the PLO's only option was now diplomacy. Moreover, the dispersion of PLO troops to several Arab nations eroded a significant portion of the movement's military effectiveness plummeting down its bargaining power as well as political influence. In such an embarrassing situation, Arafat remained almost without any trusted ally. Even radical country like Syria under whose influence the PLO had to direct its movement throughout the 70s remained half-heartedly committed to the Palestinian revolution as indicated by her military inaction during the siege of Beirut.

Although after the Lebanon war, Arafat envisioned diplomacy as the only instrument to carry forward the Palestinian cause, later on various diplomatic moves by the other concerned parties appeared to be incompatible with the move of the PLO in their aim and purpose. In this connection, mention may be made about the three peace plans floated in the year 1982 soon after the Lebanon war. These plans become a subject of discord and debate within the PLO factions putting Arafat in an embarrassing position diplomatically. The Arab League plan (September 1982) and the Brezhnev plan (September 1982) were acceptable to the PLO as these recognized the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their establishment of an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, an aim that the PLO nourishes. But much doubt and

skepticism prevailed over the outcomes of these proposals.⁹⁰ As mentioned earlier, the Palestinians have had very little faith in their Arab compatriots who from the beginning used the Palestinian as a bargaining card in various disputes among themselves. Besides, the designing of the Arab League plan mostly by the conservative Arab countries further seemed to remind the Palestinians of the insincere and fluid attitudes possessed by these countries towards them. Side by side, the Brezhnev plan appeared to be another political stunt floated to regain its lost confidence in the Arab world as the Palestinians were largely dissatisfied with Moscow's impotent role in the Lebanon war.

A little attention should, however, be paid to the controversial 'Reagan Plan' (July 1981) which though totally rejected by the PLO, still dominated the thinking of a section of the PLO led by Arafat during the period from the invasion of Lebanon to the final uprising or intifada in the occupied territories. Many consider the Reagan plan as the first of its kind to come forward with specific proposals for peace in the Middle East. With due note on Israel's security, the plan envisaged a formation of a self-government by the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip in association with Jordan. Under the plan, Jerusalem was to remain undivided and its final status was to be decided through negotiations.⁹¹ The Reagan plan was essentially like the agreement in the Camp David excepting a new dimension—the Jordanian option which would replace the Palestinians in any future talk. But what appears gloomier is that there is no mention of the inalienable right of the Palestinian people, the right of self-determination and the formation of an independent Palestinian State. The terms 'self-government' and 'association with Jordan' were ambiguous. The plan failed to mention whether 'self-government' meant a sovereign or

90. See for details, Golam Mostafa, "PLO in Peace Dilemma", BISS Journal, Volume 4, November 3, 1983, pp. 56-76.

91. Ibid.

government having limited autonomy under Israeli control or Jordanian control.⁹²

A critical analysis of the events would show that the US actually took advantage of the PLO's precarious position following its setback in the Lebanon war. The US could, perhaps, perceive well the weakness of the PLO in her face. This would revive PLO's confidence in key US involvement in the region regarding the Palestinian problem. The US also keenly observed that the PLO without any ally would now be forced to move towards a rapprochement with Jordan, a trusted ally of the US, despite many of the past irritants in their relationship for such probable reasons.

First, a shift in PLO's concentration to occupied territories in post Lebanon war period entails a reconciliation between the PLO and Jordan. The proximity of Jordan to occupied territories would allow the PLO a direct access to the West Bank.

Second, Jordan was a confrontationist state assuming a central position in the Arab-Israeli conflict after Egypt had been won over by the Camp David peace treaty.

Besides, Jordan too had her own considerations to implicate her political interests in the Palestinian question.

First, Jordan continued to have a legal claim over the West Bank acknowledged by the UN Security Council resolutions 243 and 330.⁹³

Second, Jordan had administrative link with the West Bank where her rules and regulations remained in force. Nearly 50% of Jordan's parliament members were drawn from that area.⁹⁴

Third, Jordan was in charge of distributing economic aid throughout the occupied territories along with the PLO.⁹⁵

92. Ibid.

93. Emile F. Sahliyah, op. cit., p. 122.

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid.

Fourth, not only do the Palestinians constitute 60% of the Jordanian population, but the question of leading the Palestinian cause was also involved—a claim which was not only challenged by the PLO but also Syria. Another consideration was Jordan's historical linkage to the Palestinian problem.

Along with all the above mentioned considerations, the factor of national security also loomed large in the calculation of Jordanian policy makers. The question of its security and internal political instability in the occupied territories after the Lebanon war were a matter of concern to the King. The leadership in Jordan was apprehensive that with the termination of the Palestinian military activities in southern Lebanon, the Begin government might attempt to resolve the Palestinian question at the expense of Jordan's Royal family. In fact, Shamir and Sharon asserted that "there was no need for a second Palestinian state since Jordan is a Palestine state".⁹⁶

As a result of the pivotal role assigned to Jordan by the US as per the Reagan plan, Jordan revived its interests in pursuing its drive to recover the West Bank at the expense of the Palestinians. It may be mentioned here that from the beginning Jordan's West Bank policy and its general approach towards the Palestinian question has no doubt been motivated by Hussein's own interests. The Reagan plan coincided with Jordan's earlier intention of not creating a Palestinian state within its neighbourhood. One may be reminded about the United Arab Kingdom plan of Jordan in 1972 that sought the replacement of Israeli occupation with an autonomous Palestinian regime consisting of the West Bank and any other Palestinian territory from which Israeli forces withdrew, linked to Jordanian regime consisting of the east bank in federated state known as the UAK.⁹⁷ In Reagan's plan there was a hint that such a goal may be realized provided Jordan plays a balancing role between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

96. Ibid.

97. Muhammad Hallaj, "Alternatives to Occupation", in Nasser Aruri (ed), *op. cit.*, p. 429.

For Yasser Arafat it was sheer pragmatism that led him to deal with the known devil knowing fully well that Jordan had always betrayed the cause of the Palestinians. What he actually opted for was to find a forum in collaboration with Jordan to dig out a way for talks with the US. This amounted to sharp criticism against him by the radical leaders like George Habash and Naif Hawatmeh who earlier insisted on total rejection of the US Plan. Accordingly, they found it an opportune moment to draw the sympathy of the hardliners within Al Fatah. It is at this critical time that various radical leaders with the help and support from countries like Syria and Libya tried to undermine the leadership of Arafat in the PLO movement.

Meanwhile, the growing political unrest and agitation in the occupied territories against Israel's settlements and drive to implement the so called autonomy plan drew the attention of Arafat in post Lebanon war period. Being alert at Arafat's concern in the occupied territories, Jordan was attempting to enhance its standing in the occupied territories by relying more on the US than before. In fact, even few months before the intifada started in the occupied territories, Jordan remained attached to the Reagan plan with the ostensible aim of substituting the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.

It was not until the time when the intifada took a definite turn that Jordan had to make a reassessment of the overall situation. As will be indicated later, it was the King's historic decision to cut ties with the West Bank on 31 July 1988 that added a new stimuli to Arafat's inexorable journey towards the declaration of an independent state in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza strip.

With intifada, the Palestine movement has been diversified with two distinct dimensions—internal and external, the former being more active. Much of the course of the PLO movement and the political thinking of Arafat continue to remain influenced by the phenomenal event of intifada till todate.

THE PRE-EMINENCE OF OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE INTIFADA

The genesis of the conflict between the Palestinians and Jews, the course of the PLO resistance movement through a number of events, and the fluctuating inter-Arab politics having its ramification on such a movement are the developments that form an all round background of the current intifada. Thus, this uprising is to be looked upon as essentially a process which has been the culmination of all the developments taken place earlier.

The intifada may be viewed as a revolution seeking to change the status quo, thus like any other revolution it reflects the total discontent and exasperation of the masses towards the existing situation. The masses under occupation watched with dismay the various predicaments that the externally based leadership of the PLO faced from time to time. More frustrating to them was the continued rigid policy of Israel with no sign of compromise or flexibility towards the Palestinian cause in particular. As a result, all peace efforts and proposals eventually foundered and the Palestinian cause began to remain in the backwater of Arab politics for a considerable period of time.

Many tend to argue that it was after the Lebanon war that the conscience of the Palestinians in the occupied territories was awakened due to the perilous situation faced by the Palestinians. This is true in view of the fact that the war caused a great shock among the Palestinians living in West Bank and Gaza strip creating a feeling of uncertainty and anxiety about what might next happen to their parent organization, the PLO. But at the same time, the shock of the Palestinians over the degree and intensity of Israel's military action against the PLO was accompanied by a sense of pride towards the PLO whose forces had fought for weeks against sophisticated army of Israel unseen in previous Arab-Israeli wars.⁹⁸ The people in the occupied territories still hoped that the PLO

98. Emile F. Sahliyah, *op. cit.* p. 34.

would keep the full confidence and trust of the Palestinians and their dispersion from Lebanon would not mean an end to the just cause of the Palestinian national struggle. Indeed, many viewed the PLO's departure from Beirut as a signal that the organization would now pursue diplomacy as the main vehicle of accomplishing its political objectives. On the other hand, the PLO leadership after the debacle in the Lebanon war, began to look upon the masses under occupation as the last asset in his hand to compensate for the loss of its second base of revolution. Henceforth, internal factor began to figure prominently in the Palestinian calculation. This strengthened the subjective conditions of the Palestinian national movement. Meanwhile, a set of objective conditions were cropping up, mainly the unbearable conditions caused by the occupation policy of Israel. The maturation of a long felt negative political, social and economic experiences of the masses under occupation was, in fact, among the most important factors to ignite the fire of intifada in the occupied territories.

In view of the above, an attempt will be made in this section to deal with two important aspects, the resistance movement inside the occupied territories and the occupation policy of Israel.

RESISTANCE IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Many analysts, specially of the west, have tended to portray the present uprising as a sudden, unprecedented event standing in contrast to the long history of armed struggle waged by the PLO and its member groups since the mid 1960s.⁹⁹ Such a view holds true in the sense that the masses have not resorted to arms, but mere stones, to fight the regular army. But the overall phenomenon is not something new. In this connection, it is important to bear in mind that the resistance movement inside the occupied territories,

99. Dr. Yezid Sayigh, "Struggle within, struggle without : the transformation of PLO politics since 1982", *International Affairs*, Vol. 65, November 2. Spring 1989, p. 265.

remaining somehow in attenuated form, has a history of its own that moved almost parallel with the external movement of the PLO with the same aim in view.

An attempt to delve into the history of Palestinian resistance movement from within requires a searching of the root from the past. Viewed in this perspective, the history of the Palestinian resistance can be traced back to the time when the Palestinians put a formidable challenge to the British mandated administration against the illegal immigration of Jews into Palestine during the thirties. As mentioned earlier, the 1937 Arab revolt against the British administration as the first organized movement was the culmination of Arab resentment against the Jews and an overt manifestation of the nationalistic and indigenous sentiments. This sentiment was kept in motion till the state of Israel was proclaimed in the Palestinian territory. With the passage of time, as mentioned earlier, the Palestinians became the captive of history marked by cruel realities. As a result, a significant portion of these people remained in diaspora while the rest continued to remain under Israeli occupation as fait accompli.

In the preceding section, an attempt was made as to how the Palestinian leadership developed with its external base operating under severe constraints mainly due to the fluidity of Arab politics, parochial attitudes of the Arab nations marked by self-interests and the policies of the outside powers. In the occupied territories, the resistance movement, however, represents a different story. Here the masses living under direct Israeli rule had little maneuverability to propagate their just cause quite independently and freely. Despite such a constraint, the Palestinian people rallied around the PLO movement that was being carried out outside the occupied territories by giving a psychological support to it.

As is known until 1967 the West Bank remained under Jordanian control and the Gaza strip was administered by Egypt. During this time, there was a difference in administration in both the areas.

But the administration in these areas shared one common thing—the participation of the traditional Palestinian elites in key local administrative positions. If we recall, it will be evident that Egypt's initiative to launch sporadic guerrilla activities against Israel turned Gaza strip in the late fifties and early sixties into a centre of Palestinian resistance. But all opposition in the West Bank was systematically muzzled. In fact, the earliest nationalist consciousness came up against many obstacles like the total security measures enacted by Egypt and Jordan to stop infiltration into Israeli territory and the disorganization of cadres and weapons.¹⁰⁰

It was only after the occupation in 1967 that the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip had a fresh dent in their mind about the actual Israeli intention in the area. Since then they had to live "face to face with their perceived dispossession with no third party or geographic distance intervening".¹⁰¹ Thus, they were quick to visualize a situation where Israel would not be willing to withdraw so easily. As a result, resistance took the form of memoranda, petition, and protests against Israeli actions like blowing up of houses, indiscriminate arrests and unnecessary harassment of the Palestinians. Gradually the Palestinians sought to be a force for change, to project themselves as a separate entity and pursue a course of action that will be effective in halting Israel's drive into the territories.¹⁰²

The battle of Karamah which proved wrong the invincibility of Israeli power was a turning point in Palestinian resistance movement both at the external as well as internal level. It aggrandized the morale of the occupied people. However, the jubilation of the masses was short lived as the Black September incident in Jordan had a shattering effect on the Palestinian movement due to its loss of base in Jordan. As a result, doubt and uncertainty began to

100. Democratic Palestine, PLO publication, No. 32, March 1989.

101. Cited in World Focus, September 1989.

102. Abdallah Frangi, op. cit., p. 183.

prevail in the minds of the occupied masses about the role of the PLO in future. More perturbing to them was the loss of a sanctuary in the vicinity of the occupied areas from where the PLO operated its resistance movement in various directions till 1971.

It may be mentioned here that the presence of Arafat in the resistance movement increased the credibility of the PLO in the eyes of the occupied masses. Their views and opinions did not seem to contradict the ones professed by Arafat under the auspices of the PLO. Among the masses also there was a universal desire for complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories and a general agreement on the principle of self-determination meaning that the political needs and aspirations of the Palestinian people would be decided by the Palestinians themselves. Despite many of the divisive undercurrents in the PLO structure, mainly due to personal and ideological rivalries, the PLO continued to remain as "both the institutional expression of Palestinian consciousness and the appropriate instrument of Palestinian self-determination"¹⁰³ in the thinking of the masses. It may be noted here that whatever bitter and sweet experiences the PLO movement faced outside, the same had its reverberation in the occupied land.

The agonizing persecution of the Palestinians by the Jordanian regime left behind a sad legacy that remained fresh in the memory of the occupied masses. They started becoming increasingly skeptical about the covert conspiracy of Jordan to side track the issue of Palestinian right of self-determination whenever opportunity arose. The proposal set forward by Jordan for a "United Arab Kingdom" battered the Palestinian hope for a separate homeland. This resulted in sharp reaction against Jordan whose elements were totally ignored by the revolutionary masses, thereby paving the way for a new leadership that was more outright and progressive in their demand for self-determination.

103. Mark Tessler and Ann Lesch, 'Israel's Drive into West Bank and Gaza', US Reports, 1983, No. 1. p. MT-1-83/9.

Being profoundly influenced by Arafat's dual strategy of armed struggle and diplomacy, the masses in the occupied territories could lend support to Arafat's movement diplomatically only as resort to arms appeared to be a distant possibility on their part. The PLO leaders reciprocated such overture of the masses in a tangible manner. For the first time some 100 prominent personalities were invited from the West Bank and Gaza strip to the tenth meeting of PNC in 1972.¹⁰⁴ Despite Israel's threat to such open participation of the leaders in the PLO forum, the gesture helped to unify the political bondage between the occupied masses and the PLO movement.

The resistance movement in the occupied territories seemed to reach its watershed when in 1973 the Palestine National Front (PNF) was organized. The front regarded itself as the main body to represent the political leadership in the West Bank and Gaza strip. Its aims were to resist the Zionist occupying forces to defend Arab land and to uphold Arab culture and history. It called for the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, especially of the right of self-determination. With the passage of time, the PNF was successful in organizing resistance movement in the occupied territories. It may be relevant here to mention that during the October war of 1973, it organized passive resistance of the Palestinian people as thousands of workers boycotted their jobs in Israeli factories, paralyzing many of their companies. Later on, the influence of the PNF was further enhanced when a number of trade unions, professional associations and social institution found its growth under the canopy of PNF.¹⁰⁵ The PLO as the parent organization hailed the formation of the PNF from the beginning and some of its diplomatic successes in the early and mid seventies were a source of inspiration for the newly formed organization in the occupied territories. The PNF was not critical about

104. Abdallah Frangi, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

105. *Ibid.*, p. 185.

Arafat's diplomacy of concessions when he narrowed down the concept of a Palestinian homeland to include only the areas occupied in 1967 instead of the areas envisaged in the UN partition plan of 1947.

The new organization with many of their activities remaining clandestine had a direct impact on the Palestinian leadership. As a result, there took place a demise of the traditional political elites and an emergence of a new mass-based political movement in conformity with the new realities of occupation. The proof of the PNF's new strength and popularity were clearly manifested in 1976 local elections when its members bagged 148 out of the 191 mayoralties and town councillorship. The overwhelming victory of the PNF in 1976 local elections was a milestone event in the history of the resistance movement in the occupied territories.¹⁰⁶ The event is significant for several reasons. *First*, it foiled the attempt of Israel to make those Palestinians victorious who were loyal to Israel and rejected the PLO cause. *Second*, the victory seemed to confirm the fact that some of the forces like the traditional family-clan rivalry and the cleavage between the urban and rural population had now subsided to go for a more representative type of leadership out of the occupied masses. *Third*, the PNF's victory testified the popularity of the PLO among the masses placing Israel in an awkward situation. This is better explained in the words of Karim Khalif, then mayor of Ramallah "We are for the PLO, and we say this in our electoral speeches. This is our main electoral issue. The people who come along to our meetings do not ask about road improvements and new factories. We want an end to occupation".¹⁰⁷ *Fourth*, the election victory brought to forefront the identity of the Palestinians as a separate entity and externally gave an assurance to the PLO movement about the commitment of the occupied masses to the PLO cause.

106. Ibid.

107. Ibid.

The Palestinian national movement organized around the nucleus of mayors and municipalities elected in 1976 underwent considerable expansion within a short period of time. The consistent and concerted leadership inspired the masses and strengthened their determination to resist the occupying forces. Since 1976 a series of demonstrations and protest marches were carried in which the Palestinians unequivocally demanded an end to Israeli repression on them and withdrawal of Israeli troops from the occupied territories. It was natural that Israel would confront the situation promptly. As it happened the mayors were deprived of some important rights to represent the town in relation with the military government, the right to grant building permission, control over municipal utilities etc.¹⁰⁸

However, the crude reality is that the internal resistance movement being confined to demonstrations and protests could hardly alter the implacable attitude of Israeli authority towards the masses as a whole. Although the activities of the internal resistance were a source of anxiety to the Israeli authority from within, its main concern was to deal with the PLO in the international plank. As indicated earlier, in the late seventies and early eighties various peace efforts and plans could hardly figure out a tenable solution for the simmering Palestine problem. The result was that the Palestinians in the diaspora and the occupied territories became increasingly disillusioned with the international community about their ineffective ways of dealing with the problem. The PNF remaining only as an appendage to the main PLO movement outside watched the developments helplessly that later on had their repercussions in the occupied territories.

The resistance movement felt the same shock as was felt by the PLO due to the Camp David peace process that sought for a limited autonomy in the occupied territories under Israel. A blatant opposition was mounted against the Camp David agreement which was

108. Ibid., p. 187.

termed as the legalization of occupation, the incorporation of the occupied territories and intensification of Israeli control over the Palestinian people. A special committee, the National Leadership Committee (NLC) was formed by the mayors to organize a formidable and effective opposition to the Camp David agreement¹⁰⁹. This development was conterminous with the ones then prevailing in the Arab world—a total opposition to the Camp David agreement by the united Arab front excepting Egypt which was a party to it. As Gaza and West Bank became the main focus of Israeli-Palestinian confrontation since 1979, more repressive measures were taken to quash the opposition at home and the mayors were viewed as posing a security threat to Israel. The principal objectives of Israel at this critical juncture seemed to be (i) to step up the settlements in various occupied areas (ii) to curtail the influence of the PLO (iii) the introduction of autonomy as envisaged by the Camp David. On the other hand, despite the rigors of occupation policy and various suppressive measures unleashed by the Israeli authorities, the Palestinians remained committed to making the Camp David agreement null and void, thereby keeping open the chances of the establishment of an independent state. Even the so-called civil administration in the occupied territories to replace the military administration failed to placate the Palestinians. The internal resistance was also being supported by the Palestinians who had their political and military infrastructures in southern Lebanon until June 1982 when Lebanon was invaded by Israel in the pretext of providing safety and security to the civilian population of the towns and villages in northern Israel. The Lebanon war resulting in a dislocation of the PLO forces from Lebanon created utter frustration among the masses in the occupied territories about the grim future of PLO. The war was preceded by a severe crackdown upon the Palestinian nationalist movement and its leaders inside the occupied territories. The crackdown included a large scale arrest of demonstrators, closure of schools and universities, censorship of local

109. Ibid.

Arab press and banning its circulation in the West Bank and Gaza strip. Many of the municipal councils in the occupied territories were dissolved, the most noticeable action being the removal from office of the moderate mayor of Gaza, Rashed Al Shawa.¹¹⁰

Among the peace plans that followed the Lebanon war of 1982, the Reagan peace plan appeared to be contemptuous and totally unacceptable to the occupied masses. Once again a fresh bid by Jordan to interfere in the Palestinian affairs was visibly manifested in Jordan's enthusiasm in accepting the plan. It may be mentioned here that ever since the floating of the Reagan peace plan, Hussein undertook a number of programmes with a view to creating a moderate Palestinian leadership in the occupied territories.¹¹¹ In this connection, Jordan was reported to be working in collusion with Israel to undermine and sideline Arafat and his popularity in the occupied territories. At one stage the occupied masses also became discontent with Arafat's gesture, somehow covertly shown, in finding a solution to the Palestinian problem through the Jordanian option.

The failure of the various international efforts to address the Palestinian problem with sincerity utterly frustrated the masses. They noticed a politics of duplicity in the Arab region and a general conspiracy of the superpowers to frustrate their cause by all means. As a result, to give a fresh momentum to the Palestinian problem, Israel has been challenged from inside than outside in the early and mid-eighties. According to one estimate, clashes between Israeli troops and the Palestinians in the occupied territories increased from 500 to 3000 a year. "The ratio of internally originated incidents of conflict to those originating outside Israel nearly doubled since 1984. In 1986 it was 18 to 1"¹¹²

110. Emile F. Sahliyah, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-34.

111. Kapil Kaul, *op. cit.*, p. 929.

112. Cited in *World Focus*, September, 1989.

A conspectus of the resistance movement in the occupied territories would, perhaps, reveal the following characteristics. *First*, the indigenous movement in the occupied territories had always been influenced by the external developments related to the Palestinian issue. In this connection, the PLO movement outside with its entire course of events had profound impact on the masses under occupation. *Second*, the local leadership under the umbrella of PNF operated outside the control of the traditional leadership providing an opportunity for many elements with different ideologies and views to work together. These mass-based movements which included a number of trade unions, labour, student and women groups offered various nationalist and communist groups an opportunity to coordinate their activities. *Third*, although the organizations in the occupied territories were roughly organized, they were united on two counts : opposition to the Israeli occupation and support for the PLO's nationalist goal. *Fourth*, the internal resistance movement was passive in the sense that the constraints set on the occupied masses due to their spatial placement, did not provide an opportunity for the occupied masses to resort to arms. Their movement was mostly marked by protests, street demonstrations, strikes and often sporadic attacks on Jewish settlements and complexes. In the ultimate analysis, their open trepidation against the Israeli rule was instrumental in creating overt mass support for the PLO movement—a factor which the diaspora leaders had always taken notice of. *Fifth*, the resistance movement was a clear manifestation of the resentment and personal grievances the Palestinians possessed in their mind against the Israeli occupational policy. It was the masses under occupation that felt the brunt of Israeli oppression and repression at home. This was an objective factor that always kept the suffering masses united on a common issue to come out of the colonial pattern of Israeli domination. This sentiment of the occupied masses acted favourably in projecting the Palestine cause world wide under the platform of PLO movement.

THE OCCUPATION POLICY OF ISRAEL

The occupation policy of Israel with its severe impact on the social, economic and political spheres of the Palestinian society was a decisive factor in adding the maximum impetus to the resistance movement in the occupied territories that ultimately culminated in the present uprising.

The total policy can probably be encapsuled in one single word as "colonization". The Israeli occupation of Palestine and the concomitant colonization of the occupied lands are distinctly characterized by an ideology which denies the very existence of the Palestinian people.¹¹³ As a result, in 21 years the occupied territories have witnessed extensive social, economic, political and cultural dislocation that have created a fertile ground for a wholesome social revolution in the areas.

The occupation policy of Israel has many serious dimensions i.e. the settlement policy, the political policy and the economic policy, each having its negative fall-out on the masses in general. A brief attempt will be made in this section to deal with these policies although the causes and effects of all the policies are inter-related and pursued ostensibly with one aim in view—the strengthening of Israeli presence in the occupied territories.

Ever since the territories of West Bank and Gaza strip were annexed by Israel in 1967, the policy of Jewish settlements in these areas, perhaps, became the most calculated attempt by Israel to establish its strong political foothold in the occupied areas. Israel could perceive it well that without permanent physical presence in these areas, her long-term economic and political control of the annexed areas could not be possible.

Israel devised a philosophical premise on which her settlement policy was based. It considered the West Bank and Gaza strip to be liberated and not occupied since the Jews have a historical right

113. Nasser H. Aruri, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

to Eretz Israel.¹¹⁴ However, according to Israeli officials, Israeli policy of settlements in the occupied territories was based on a series of priorities, on security and political considerations, on settlement requirements and on the existing possibilities and restrictions.¹¹⁵

The settlement policy of Israel is a complex and diverse one that went through several phases. As a result, through a multifaceted strategy, the Israeli government has consolidated its hold in East Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank and Gaza strip that experienced increasing rate of settlements after the Likud government headed by Prime Minister Begin came to power in 1977. It may be mentioned here that ever since the Likud government came to power in 1977, some 70 settlements were built in the West Bank and 10 in Gaza, more than twice as many as were constructed during the decade of labour rule that followed the capture of the territories.¹¹⁶

A number of organizations in Israel propagating the policy of settlement on a biblical claim that the West Bank and Gaza strip were a part of Eretz Israel, hence they were liberated and not occupied, played a formidable role in influencing Begin's policy of settlement. In this connection, mention may be made about the role of Gush Emunim movement that created the greatest stir in Begin's mind for an active settlement policy. That Palestinian right to self-determination had no place in Begin's thinking is clearly manifested in his following utterance, largely influenced by the religious zeal and chauvinistic politics of the Gush Emunim movement, "Judea and Samaria (the biblical name of West Bank) are Israeli lands belonging to the Jewish people. Settlement is a right and a duty. We have and will continue to fulfill that right

114. Jan Metzger, Martin Orth and Christian Sterzing, *This is our Land: The West Bank under Occupation*, (London, Zed press, 1983), p. 62.

115. Israeli settlements in Gaza and the West Bank: (including Jerusalem). Their Nature and Purpose. UN publication, New York, 1982.

116. Mark Tessler and Ann Lesch, op. cit., p. 2/MT-1-83.

and that duty"¹¹⁷ It is interesting to note that the Israeli authority adopted a number of tricks for establishing settlements in the occupied territories in order to give a legal cover to such a policy. Most of the Arab lands were brought into possession of Israeli authority through confiscation and expropriation, acquisition of absentee property, land purchases and destruction of absentee property, land purchases and destruction of Arab villages.¹¹⁸

The most calculated political objective behind the settlement policy of Israel was its attempt to facilitate the implementation of autonomy plan in the occupied territories. It was during the time of Begin that the question of autonomy for the Palestinian in the occupied territories arose out of the Camp David accord signed between his country, the US and Egypt. To Begin, however, the autonomy for the Palestinians as envisaged in the Camp David process had a different connotation. The autonomy plan as developed by him was to take into consideration, besides other, the following conditions. *First*, the permanent nature of the Jewish settlements subject to Israeli jurisdiction, law and administration. *Second*, Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank and Gaza so as to preclude any possibility of establishing an independent Palestine state in these territories or any other political arrangement requiring Israel's withdrawal.¹¹⁹

The settlement policy had resulted in adverse political, social and economic effects on the occupied masses. Being deprived of their land, thousands of Palestinians became dislocated losing their resources and livelihoods. Specially most affected were the farmers who found the Israeli settlers as competitors not for soil only, but also for another vital resource — water. Water policy reduced the resources for Arab agriculture. Out of 720 Arab wells in the West

117. Jan Mezge, Martin Orth and Christian Sterzing, op. cit., p. 31.

118. See for details, *ibid.*, p. 31.

119. Mark Tessler and Ann Lesch, op. cit.

Bank in 1967, 431 remained closed and the area under Arab cultivation declined from 260,000 hectors to 160,000 hectors in 1987.¹²⁰ Most of the settlements were dug next to springs from where the Palestinians used to haul water for watering their animals, irrigating their fields and obtaining drinking water. In some cases, these wells were used for an exclusive use of the new settlements causing shortage of water for the original users. However, what is important to take notice of is the adverse psychological effect the settlement policy had on the occupied masses. As a result of the settlement, the Palestinians had to live face to face with the Israelis confirming a fact that the occupation is not temporary. The Palestinians sensed a vivid manifestation of Israeli colonization in the settlement policy as it turned them into guests in their country with the Jews dominating all aspects of their life.

Speaking about Israeli economic exploitation of the occupied territories, Israeli demographer Mean Benevesti remarked that these territories have been transformed into a colonial set up of the first order.¹²¹ Despite the fact that 1967 tripled the size of Israel with an additional one million Palestinian Arab under its control, a true economic integration of the occupied territories with the main economy of Israel had never been possible due to the exploitative economic policy towards these areas. The problem of integration of the West Bank and the Gaza strip was viewed as a demographic one. It was suspected that in the long run one million Palestinian would lead to an Arab majority in Israel. The Jewish majority in the entire region of Palestine (the territory which had been under British mandate) was only 60% and the birth rate of the Palestinian was much more higher than that of the Jewish Israelis. The demographic configuration created a morbid fear in the Israeli mind about a future possible outweighing of the Jews by the Arabs. Thus, instead of integrating these people into the main stream of the economy,

120. Yezid Sayigh, *op. cit.* p. 262.

121. *World Focus*, September, 1989.

they were used as a source of cheap labour for the Jewish industrialists and commercial enterprises. A policy of 'labour zionism' was, in fact, perpetrated on the occupied masses.¹²²

Agriculture which was the mainstay of the Palestinian livelihood was adversely affected by the settlement policy of Israel. Since 1967, Israel has, in violation of the Geneva Convention regarding military occupation seized more than 53% of West Bank lands from its 800,000 Palestinian inhabitants for the benefit of 50,000 Jewish settlers. In Gaza strip, one of the most densely populated places of the earth, 650,000 Palestinians have been displaced to accommodate 25,000 Jewish settlers.¹²³ Besides, the number of industrial establishments in the West Bank dropped from 7300 to 2991 during the same period.¹²⁴ The decline of the productive sectors is due to the process of subordinating the territories to the Israeli economy.

According to George Ball, a former American Ambassador to the UN, the land grabbing policy of the Palestinians left the Palestinians without any choice other than to take low wage menial jobs shunned by the Jews themselves.¹²⁵ The unemployment problem created a pool of cheap Arab labour readily exploited by the Israeli authority. The occupied territories virtually turned into a source of cheap labour and a captive market for Israeli goods making them the second largest recipient of Israeli exports world wide after the USA. Israel's trade surplus with the West Bank and Gaza strip amounts to nearly \$500m a year.¹²⁶ The masses in the occupied territories have to contribute to Israeli treasury nearly \$80 million a year as taxes without being benefitted by any kind of social service there.¹²⁷

The Palestinians were discriminated in regard to wages also. The 108,000 West Bankers and Gazans who work as unskilled

122. Jan Metzger, Martin Orth and Christian Sterzing, *op. cit.*, p. 86-87.

123. World Focus, September, 1989.

124. Yezid Sayigh, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

125. World Focus, September, 1989.

126. *Ibid.*

127. *Ibid.*

labourers receive half the wages paid to the Jewish workers for the same comparable jobs. Most of the Arab workers have to pay 20% of their earnings to Israel's social security agency without receiving any benefit like unemployment compensation and pensions. Likewise, the Palestinian farmers are charged twice as much for irrigation water as Jewish farmers pay, but they receive none of the marketing subsidies provided to Israel.¹²⁸

The political and cultural oppression of the occupied masses is another agonizing aspect of the Israeli occupation policy. It may be mentioned here that the occupying authority has been seriously accused of violating human rights in the occupied territories. On several occasions, the Palestinians had been subjected to administrative detention, torture and ill-treatment on the suspect that they were associated with the resistance movement. Under Israeli occupation, the political expression of the Palestinians was totally restricted. All political activities like meetings and assemblies are forbidden. Formation of political parties and organization is banned followed by a strict control over the circulation of Arab newspapers and magazines. The Israeli authority argues that such political suppression is a necessary step to stabilize the internal security system of Israel. Equally shocking is the cultural oppression of the occupied masses. All efforts are rendered to suppress the Palestinians from becoming an identity of their own. The occupation policy did not restrain from such acts as pillaging of archaeological and cultural property in the occupied territories, interference with religious freedom, religious practices and family rights and customs. Nearly 70% of the total population of the area are now under 30s. They are enrolled in various schools, colleges and universities. Realizing the importance of the school population, the Israeli administration has empowered its officers to appoint and dismiss teaching and administrative staff and to delete text books.¹²⁹

128. Ibid.

129. See for details, Jan Metzger, Martin Orth and Christian Sterzing, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-15.

The constraints of occupational policy created a tremendous impact on the Palestinian society. As a result, the Palestinians en-masse protested against such Israeli acts from time to time. They were, in fact, heading towards a new socialization of their society paralyzed by the creeping colonization of Israel. The people en-masse became politically conscious when they felt the betrayal of their cause in several peace plans and efforts as mentioned earlier. As a result, when they openly started raising their voice against Israel's present rule, Israel responded to suppress the dissent with more repressive measures. With the outbreak of intifada, this repression became more intense and coordinated in nature.

INTIFADA—A MOVEMENT WITH NEW CHARACTERISTICS

In an atmosphere of mounting violence and tension, any act of Israeli repression was enough to ignite the fire of uprising in the occupied territories. Finally the frustration, aggrieved sentiments and emotions of the occupied masses found an outlet in the form of an escalating revolution when the people en-masse took to streets to protest against one of the most brutal acts of the Israeli army—an attempt to bury alive four Palestinians with the use of bulldozers. Ninth December 1987 was the day on which the Palestinians took a fresh vow to make new sacrifices and undergo unforeseen sufferings in defense of their innate values of freedom, justice and democracy. Abraham Rabinovich, an Israeli journalist of *Jerusalem Post* while writing about the intifada said, "Societies are normally held together by a mixture of consensus and fear, but in Gaza strip and West Bank it had only been fear. Now the fear is gone, at least among the half of the population born since the six-day war in 1967. Young men bared their chests at the soldiers and dared them to shoot".¹³⁰

The Palestinian uprising now occupies the same place in the annals of the Third World freedom movement as the Algerian

130. *World Focus*, September, 1989.

struggle for independence and the Vietnamese battle for freedom. It has created a new reverberation of the Palestinian cause in every corner of the globe exposing the odious picture of Israeli colonialism in the occupied territories. Some new political strategy, tactics, slogans, compromises and political moves of the occupied masses are being manifested in the current uprising. As a result, the intifada has evoked a new interest among political scientists to concentrate on the new phenomenon. Being qualitatively a new stage in the history of the Palestinian struggle, intifada is having its great impact on the major forces and structure of the Palestinian society.¹³¹

This section of the paper will attempt to focus on some of the features or characteristics which have made intifada a qualitatively new phenomenon in the Palestinian-zionist conflict.

Geographic and demographic comprehensiveness : One of the prominent features of the current intifada is its comprehensiveness, geographically and demographically. The uprising has its ramifications in almost all the villages and cities of the occupied territories where confrontations with the occupation forces are of a daily occurrence now. A wholehearted mass participation in the uprising by young school boys and girls, elderly men and women, children, young and old is a distinctive trend associated with the current movement. This is a logical result of the fact that zionist state terrorism and suppression has affected the whole spectrum of the Palestinian society. "The boy hurling a stone at an armoured vehicle, the woman abusing the Israeli soldier and daring him to do his worst, the teen-agers picking up a smoking tear gas shell and throwing it back at the occupying troops—these are images which have occurred and reoccurred and which now symbolize the struggle of the oppressed people everywhere".¹³²

131. Democratic Palestine, PLO publication, No, 32, March 1989.

132. Khaleej Times, January 1989.

Popular nature of the uprising with a new strategy : This is a significant feature of the uprising as the masses in the occupied Palestine gave a popular nature to the movement thereby setting a model to be emulated. Looking back into the past history as revealed in the earlier sections, one fact becomes glaringly clear that resistance was always in motion in Palestine both before and after 1948 when the state of Israel was proclaimed. Before 1948, the urban and rural masses actively participated in a series of revolts against zionist immigration and colonization. These struggles had a broad popular nature.¹³³

With the creation of Israel, the Palestinian resistance movement that grew outside the occupied territories adopted the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare for more than a quarter of a century. Throughout this period, there was also increased mass participation in the struggle against the enemy. The Arab and Palestinians were always in the upright spirit to face the zionist regime at a high price. In the occupied territories, the Palestinians as mentioned before, also repeatedly confronted the zionist enemy with their limited potentials and resources. However, these acts of the mass movement had not become a concrete action until the uprising when a continuous and comprehensive confrontation has taken place between the zionist and the occupied masses.

The current uprising owes its credence to the popular mass base which has not adopted the strategy of the classical war or the guerrilla tactic of the PLO's resistance movement. It is, indeed, a bewildering feature of the—uprising that the unarmed Palestinians are confronting the regular army of Israel with mere stones and pebbles. This stone revolution distinguishes the present resistance from any kind of armed resistance, waged before by the PLO from external bases.

A new leadership : The popular nature of the movement has largely facilitated the creation of new leadership reflecting the

133. Democratic Palestine, PLO publication, No. 32, March 1989.

grass-root character of the intifada. It may be mentioned here that within weeks of the outbreak of intifada in the occupied territories, a clandestine group calling itself the Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) had emerged to coordinate the activities of the revolvers. Besides a covert group composed of 15 members, three each from the four major PLO groups and three from Islamic Jihad is functioning now with many of its members belonging to the new generation. Many of them experienced the jail life in Israel and have replaced the traditional leaders who had dealt with the Israelis and Jordanian at the cost of the Palestinian interests¹³⁴

Palestine-zionist conflict-a new turning point : An important feature of the current uprising is that the conflict has now assumed the character of a Palestinian-zionist conflict, instead of Arab-zionist struggle. Before the creation of Israel, the internal struggle was essentially shouldered by the indigenous Palestinian masses against continuous Jewish immigration that took place under the protective umbrella of the British government. Till the last day of the creation of Israel, the Palestinian masses tried to resist every effort of Israel to create an artificial state in the region. As indicated earlier, since the creation of Israel Palestinian problem attained an overtly Arab national dimension, as a result of which the Palestinian question was virtually obliterated. The conservative as well the progressive Arab states expeditiously used the Palestinian issue in their internal squabbling and did very little to uphold the right of self-determination of the Palestinians. Whatever efforts were rendered by the Arabs, they were motivated by their self-interests.

The Palestinian movement due to several constraints could pay little attention to the resistance movement in the occupied territories until the Lebanon war when it was without any sanctuary in any part of the Arab world. This is not to deny the diplomatic

134. Aaron David Miller, "Palestinians and the Intifada : One year later", Current History, February 1989, p. 74.

support rendered to the internal resistance by the PLO as indicated earlier. Following the loss of PLO base in Lebanon Arafat found an opportunity to exploit the agitating masses who have been demanding an end to Israeli occupation. Arafat considered the occupied masses as the last card in his hand to be exploited more tangibly. As a result, the focus of the conflict shifted to the internal scene when the Palestinians were facing the Zionists face to face. With the outbreak of intifada, the resentment and agitation of the masses got further consolidated. In other words; "the uprising has restored the conflict to its primary nature and put the regional crisis in the correct perspective".¹³⁵

While it is true that the uprising has brought to focus the Palestinian-Zionist dimension of the problems, it is important to be remembered that Arab nationalist dimension is also necessary. Combating the Zionist plan is not only the responsibility of the Palestinian. The support of the Arab is also necessary for the success of the on-going struggle seeking liberation, social progress and unity.¹³⁶

The centre of gravity shifts to Palestine : The intifada has shifted the center of gravity of the Palestinian national movement within Palestine itself.¹³⁷ In other words, the Palestinian movement has now attained an internal dimension with occupied masses expressing their sense of identity as 'Palestinian only'.

The appalling condition of the occupied masses under Israeli rule was never overlooked by the PLO movement. However, due to physical, military and economic limitation, the intensity of the resistance was low and could hardly create any decisive impact on Israel's state machinery. Besides, living under the oppressive rule of Israel, the occupied masses led a very constricting life. It was thus natural that the internal forces looked forward to the PLO

135. Democratic Palestine, PLO publication, No. 32, March 1989.

136. Ibid.

137. Ibid.

movement that carried on its revolution in different intractable circumstances both within and beyond the region. Thus, with the loss of PLO base in Lebanon the next base was to be consolidated in the occupied territories to increase the mass activities in the West Bank and Gaza in order to put a check to occupation policies of Israel and the Jordanian attempt to create a false alternative to the PLO. The Palestinian revolution provided the objective base for these activities through political, military and material support to the masses in the occupied territories. The attempt to liquidate Israeli control contributed to increasing role of the masses in the interior and to making the revolution give greater priority to the internal factor.¹³⁸

The intifada has directly facilitated the occupied masses to confront the Israelis face to face. This means the collapse of the Israel's false claim such as a land with a people for a people with a land or Greater Israel and so on, upon which the nebulous Zionist ideology is founded.¹³⁹

INTIFADA—AN ASSESSMENT OF ITS EFFECTS

The intifada has reached its third year and within this momentous period, it has had its profound and varied impact on the Palestinians, Israel and the world at large. Commenting on the movement's impact, Aaron David Miller, a policy planning staff of the US State Department said, "The intifada (the uprising in the Israeli occupied territories) has created new realities and set into motion certain trends for Palestinians under Israeli occupation and for those outside, which over time may have a major impact"¹⁴⁰ The results and effects of the uprising so far are dramatic in nature and the visible changes brought about by the movement are manifold—political, economic, social and psychological. At the

138. Ibid.

139. Ibid.

140. Aaron David Miller, *Current History*, op. cit., p. 73.

outset, the declaration of an independent state by Arafat in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza strip appears to be the most tangible result of intifada as it set into motion some notable events facilitating this move. But the effects and result of intifada are to be seen from a different angle taking into account some of the intangible outcome also that have had a positive impact on the Palestinian movement so far. This section of the paper is an endeavour to deal with the over-all impact of the intifada on the Palestinian movement, the Israeli leadership, the Arab world and the world at large.

A new political process : As a result of the intifada, the Palestinian external organizations established greater solidarity with the leaders of the uprising. The uprising itself had developed popular Palestinian pressure for a political initiative. What they wanted was action, not slogans and indecisiveness to end the occupation. The uprising had taken the PLO movement by surprise which had always asked the masses inside the occupied territories to keep steadfast but left for itself the right to mobilize their decision making for them.¹⁴¹ By taking control of their own fate, the occupied masses now challenged the former relationship with PLO, increasing fear among the PLO men that their importance and role would decrease.¹⁴² However, this is not to say that the internal leadership challenged the overall leadership of the PLO as the latter had its own universal representative character. As a result, the PLO felt that it should exploit politically the new opportunity to generate pressure on Israel to concede territories. In early June 1988, a special Arab Summit in Algiers was convened to discuss strategy and muster support for the PLO.¹⁴³ The Arab states as a result of the intifada were quick to sink their tactical differences and throw its full weight behind the intifada. The uprising uplifted the

141. Strategic Survey, IISS publication, 1988-89.

142. Ibid.

143. Ibid.

position of the PLO at the Summit and Arafat was again recognized unanimously as the sole leader of the Palestinians destined to represent them at an international peace conference. An active material support that the summit resolution offered the PLO was money. This enabled Arafat to support the new uprising in the occupied territories. Most notably, the Summit talked for a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict rather than a military one. These results were instrumental in reinforcing PLO's assessment that time was ripe for exploiting the uprising for a new political gain.

It may be mentioned here that PLO's central council announced specific steps to support the uprising including the creation of a higher committee, the allocation of extraordinary budget and a call for international protection of the Palestinians in the territories.¹⁴⁴ The most positive effect of the uprising on the PLO had been the containment of differing opinions and views existing between the various factions of the movement. Early in January 1988, PLO Chairman, Arafat noted that all Palestinian factions are now fighting under 'one slogan'. The appearance of joint press conference of the PLO's three key leaders, Arafat, George Habash and Naif Hawatmeh served to reinforce the image of unity among the PLO factions further.¹⁴⁵

However, the biggest challenge the PLO faced was how to convert the uprising into tenable political gain for the masses. In this connection, the event that triggered the Palestinian consideration of some political initiative was the Jordanian king's decision to disengage from the West Bank by severing administrative and legal ties with the region. Such a move facilitated largely by the intifada, was another positive gain for the PLO.

Jordan's disengagement from the West Bank : The televised address to the nation on July 31, 1988 by King Hussein that, "since there is a general conviction that the struggle to liberate the occupied

144. Aaron David Miller, *Current History*, op. cit., p. 76.

145. *Ibid.*

Palestinian land could be enhanced by dismantling the legal and administrative link between the two banks, we have to do what is required of us"¹⁴⁶ had broken the suspicion both of the PLO movement and the masses that Jordan was competing with the PLO over the West Bank. Moreover, it aroused new confidence and hope in the Palestinian mind about a possible future solution of their problem. But a critical analysis of the episode would show that Jordan had her own calculations and motivations behind such a move. In this connection, mention may be made about the renewed American involvement in the Middle East peace process inspired by the intifada. This was manifested in the Shultz plan which was floated in great Washington's fear that the Palestinian uprising would generate tension between the US allies in the Middle East, Israel, Egypt and Jordan.¹⁴⁷ The plan called for the convening of an international conference with the Palestinians represented by Jordanian/Palestinian delegation for bilateral talks among the Middle East participants to establish an interim autonomy regime for the Israeli administered territories which would last for three years and negotiation for a final settlement would continue¹⁴⁸ However, to the dismay of the US Secretary of State, Jordan's king demanded that the PLO would participate in the conference as a separate, sovereign delegation, rather than as part of a Jordanian delegation. There might be several reasons for Jordanian retreat from the Shultz plan. One of these was the fear of Syria. A second reason was the commitment Hussein had given Peres at their secret meeting in London in 1987 that Jordan would appear at negotiation together with the Palestinian representatives. Later on Hussein had ably realized that Peres was unable to gain Israeli government sanction for this new principle.¹⁴⁹ Third, the Iran-Iraq conflict loomed as a more pressing inter-Arab issue that required

146. Kapil Kaul, *op. cit.*, p. 927.

147. Strategic Survey, IISS publication, 1988-89.

148. *Ibid.*

149. *Ibid.*

Hussein to take part in a united anti-Iranian stand by the Arabs. Thus, when he convened an Arab League Summit in Amman (1987) to seek Arab solidarity against Iran, Hussein agreed to a resolution recognizing PLO's right to appear at any peace conference as a separate and sovereign delegation.¹⁵⁰

It may be mentioned here that earlier when the Reagan plan was floated in the aftermath of the Lebanon war, Jordan's predilection for exploiting the opportunity was very much in sight. In recent years Hussein with the concurrence of governments in Israel had attempted to build a basis of political support among the Palestinians in the occupied territories by paying the salaries of teachers and officials in the West Bank, offering passports to stateless Gaza refugees.¹⁵¹ At the same time, Hussein attempted to create a more moderate Palestinian leadership in the occupied territories.¹⁵² Its development plan for the occupied territories amounting to \$1 billion over five years was highly applauded as an economic incentive to the West Bank Palestinians. In this respect, Jordan seemed to score a victory when in 1986 Israel placed three Palestinians as mayors with Jordanian approval.¹⁵³ Another indicator of Jordan-Israeli mutual understanding was the opening of Jordanian-Cairo-Amman Bank in Nablus in 1986 (the first Arab Bank to operate in the West Bank).¹⁵⁴ Jordan also tried to lift the trade ban on most products from the occupied territories and allow the purchase of manufactured goods made with raw materials and machinery imported through Israeli ports.¹⁵⁵ The main motive behind an Israeli-Jordan collusion was to undermine the leadership of Arafat although Jordan could perceive well that it was a dangerous strategy for him as it would alienate

150. Ibid.

151. Kapil Kaul, *op. cit.*, p. 929.

152. Ibid.

153. Ibid.

154. Ibid.

155. Ibid.

him from the most of the Arab world due to a second Camp David type of agreement.

It was the intifada that seemed to stir the mind of the King in favour of the Palestinians as intifada has strengthened Arafat's hand and weakened his own. Pro-Jordanian Palestinians were also totally perturbed by the incident. It may be relevant here to mention that through Communiqué 11 of the uprising threat was posed to the lives of the Jordanian parliament members residing in the occupied territories.¹⁵⁶ In the ultimate analysis, the intifada was perceived in Amman as a threat to Jordan itself. The Jordanian King was quick to realize that his activities in the past were enough to create dissonance in the Palestinian mind. Thus, to placate the Palestinians and remain on the safe side from their mistrust and apprehension, Jordan took this historic decision. Although many analysts viewed this attempt as a Jordanian ploy to embarrass the PLO leadership and expose its incapability, the events that followed this decision were markedly in favour of the PLO movement. Besides, the expectation of Hussein, that his move would keep the PLO hardpressed both politically and economically and that Arafat would have no option but to come to the King again, also remained as an illusion only. Apparently what turned out to be the actual state of affairs is that the changed outlook of Hussein in reality removed many of the hurdles on the way of the PLO movement. This was of positive significance for Yasser Arafat and his movement. *First*, the suspicions and doubts among the Arab leaders and the Palestinians about a Palestinian-Jordanian confederation, an alternative to the statehood of Palestine was cleared. *Second*, the decision gave Jordan a strengthened position to say that "Jordan is not Palestine". This was a challenge to the Israeli right wingers who argue that the Palestinians already have a state in the East Bank.¹⁵⁷ *Third*, it had torpedoed the unpopular Reagan plan and put a nail on the coffin of

156. Strategic Survey, IISS publication, 1988-1989.

157. Kapil Kaul, *op. cit.*, p. 927.

the Shultz plan. *Fourth*, King Hussein's decision to renounce claims to West Bank could force Israel to deal with the PLO which refused Israeli right to exist. *Finally* at a time when the King made this decision the gulf war was about to end. It could, thus, renew Jordan's interests in the Palestinian issue in the context of new realities.

Israeli election : The intensity of intifada and the subsequent decision of Jordanian Monarch had a direct influence on the November, 1988 election in Israel. Israel was neutralized by the Knesset elections of 10 November.¹⁵⁸ In fact, the political policies for dealing with the intifada and the larger Palestine problem became an agenda on the election campaign between the two main political parties--the Likud and the Labour. The reality of the new situation influenced the Labour party to find a solution to the problem through a conflicting package of options like an international conference, Jordanian involvement in solution, territories for peace and interim measures calling for unilateral withdrawal from some territories. Even parties like Citizen Right Movement and MAPAM campaigned for an establishment of a Palestinian state if PLO recognizes the right of Israel to exist and shuns terrorism. However, the hard line attitude of the Likud could hardly be influenced by the intifada or the King's decision. The party suggested more harsher measures to quell the uprising and a continuation of the policy calling for Greater Israel and the implementation of the autonomy as envisaged by the Camp David. The Likud's status quo policy was hailed by such parties as Tehiya Tsomedet. The extreme left parties like the Israeli Communist party, the Progressives advocated two states for two peoples, immediate recognition of the PLO and comprehensive Israeli withdrawal from all territories conquered in 1967 including Jerusalem. The ultra-orthodox Jewish religious parties with its endemic anti-pathology towards Islam and the Arab Palestinians exploited the

158. Strategic Survey, IISS publication, 1988-1989.

intifada to its advantage by showing more militancy and religious orthodoxy towards the Palestinians. As a result, they made an impressive gain in the election. The election results showed a rightist political bloc of 47 seats led by the Likud, a Zionist leftist bloc of 49 seats led by the Labour, an extreme left bloc of 6 seats and multi-religious bloc of 18 parties. As a result, the election left Israel in precarious political situation for a moment. Both the Likud and the Labour parties were trying to woo the ultra-orthodox for forming a coalition¹⁵⁹. The rise of the extreme religious parties was an ominous sign in the new political scenario in Israel. The election result was not viewed favourably by the PLO movement particularly due to the fact that Labour party could not have a decisive majority in the Knesset. The PLO realized that Peres's clamour for a solution of the Palestinian problem which was kept as the top priority item in his election agenda would only succumb to a peculiar coalition where the Likud had outnumbered the Labour.

Thus, the PLO had to engineer its own move to realize the goal that it has been seeking so far. The intifada and the historic decision of the Jordan's King largely facilitated the PLO to go for a more dramatic political move breaking the festering stalemate that prevailed over the issue of Palestine so far.

The declaration of an independent Palestinian state in the occupied territories of West Bank and Gaza Strip : The declaration of an independent state in the occupied territories by the PLO's legislative body, the PNC on 15 November 1988 at Algiers meeting has been an important political development so far. The move towards an independent Palestine had been interpreted by Arafat as a bid by the PLO to translate the violent 11 month uprising in the occupied territories into tangible political gain internationally. A set of favourable factors was instrumental in motivating Arafat for this historic event. First, intifada offered the PLO and various

159. Ibid.

factions a valuable opportunity to sink their tactical differences and infuse into them a sense of moderation to coexist with Israel. *Second*, the unanimous support for the Palestinians at the Arab Summit conference in Algeria (June 1988) acted as a prop to Yasser Arafat's new strategy. *Third*, King Hussein's decision to cut administrative and legal ties with the West Bank created a great dent in the political thinking of the PLO providing an opportune moment to fill up the political vacuum there. *Fourth*, the Gulf war which kept the Arab countries involved in the conflict sapping much of their political and economic resources ended and Arafat took it as a positive sign for the Palestinian issue to reusher in a new form and shape. *Lastly*, the relaxation of tension in east-west relations after the arrival of Gorbachev as a new political phenomenon was an added incentive to Yasser Arafat for his new diplomatic move.

The PLO's new policy of moderation, flexibility and realism was reflected in its acceptance of a pair of UN resolutions 242 and 338 acknowledging Israel as a reality in this part of the world. Following the declaration of an independent state Arafat has had some immediate diplomatic gains at the international level which may be stated as (i) recognition of his newly formed state by a host of nations (ii) transferring the venue of General Assembly's session from New York to Geneva (iii) recognition of the independent state of Palestine as a UN observer by the UN General Assembly (iv) PLO's leader contact with a group of private Jews in some western capitals (v) the right to speak directly to the Security Council as 'Palestine' (vi) the direct dialogue between the US and PLO leaders.

All these peripheral diplomatic gains gave the PLO a new momentum in Middle Eastern politics. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the crux of the problem—the establishment of an independent democratic Palestinian homeland still remains far from being materialized into a reality. Many of the impending factors circumventing the new reality have, in fact, been responsible for a stale-

mate on the Palestinian question. This will be separately dealt with in the last section of the paper.

The diplomatic victory of the PLO through its opening of **dialogue with the US** should be viewed, in particular, as a remarkable development in the midst of intifada. It would be harping on the same string to go into details about the close relations existing between the US and its only Israel, the former being the main source of political and economic support for the latter. As is known, it was due to the US reluctance and indecisiveness that the resolutions 242 and 338 did never come into enforcement.¹⁶⁰ Besides, the Roger's plan, the Sinai disengagements, the Camp David peace process and lastly the Reagan plan, all spearheaded by the US, instead of normalizing the Arab-Israeli relations made it worse by spreading new political bacteria in the region keeping the Palestinian issue in ferment. Despite, the US predilection for Israel, as indicated earlier, the PLO always tried to cultivate the sympathy of the US realizing the plain truth that the US would have to remain a significant party to any resolution of the Palestinian problem. Thus, when intifada moderated the PLO leadership, American receptivity was felt by the moderate leaders as a necessary prelude to any US positive involvement in the region. This could bring pressure on Israel to negotiate a settlement. However, Arafat's address to The UN General Assembly on March 13, 1989 outlining a comprehensive settlement of the conflict within the framework of an international conference and PLO's acceptance of UN resolutions 242 and 338 failed to assuage the US administration on two grounds—the absence of any commitment to renounce terrorism which the US considers the *raison d'être* of PLO. Next, the ambiguities enveloping the PLO's acceptance of two resolutions. Later on, Arafat explicitly clarified his stance on the issue indicating the right of all ... to exist in peace and security ... including

160. Mustafa. Al Awan and PM Kamath, "The US-PLO Dialogue : Break-through in the Middle East or Another Manoeuvre ?," Strategic Analysis, August 1989, p. 567.

the state of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours according to resolutions 242 and 338. On the question of terrorism, an anathema to the US, Arafat emphatically said "I repeat for the record that we totally and absolutely renounce all forms of terrorism"¹⁶¹

Arafat's renunciation of terrorism made the Palestine Charter of 1968 completely null and void, as a result of which he had to cushion many shocks within his movement especially from the pro-Syrian groups who viewed Arafat a traitor and his renunciation of terrorism a genuine catastrophe as it implied the end of armed struggle and the demise of the Palestine Charter. The Palestine Charter emphasized that the partition of Palestine in 1947 and the establishment of the state of Israel are entirely illegal. The Palestinian Arab people expressing themselves by the armed Palestinian revolution, reject all solutions which are substitutes for the total liberation of Palestine"¹⁶² Notwithstanding these facts, Arafat's new gestures earned him new esteem and favour in many of the countries including those of the west.

As demonstrated by the dialogue between the PLO and US representatives in Tunisia, the new opening was a crucial diplomatic victory for the Palestinian movement. It was termed as the beginning of a new stage of Middle Eastern politics signifying a new reality—the representative character of the PLO. On psychological front, such opening had a disturbing effect on the hawkish faction of Israeli leadership. To Yitzhak Shamir, it was a dangerous blunder that would not help peace. Some prominent labour leaders viewed the gesture as a positive indication for a peaceful solution of the Palestinian problem and a victory for both the US and Israel. However, while the world community expected a probable possibility that within a short time Israel would face a US proposal to start a political process leading to the creation of the Palestinian state, a wide discrepancy still exists between such expectation and fulfillment.

161. Cited in *ibid*, p. 576,

162. *Ibid*.

It seems that the Palestinian leadership is now pinning its hopes on essentially one important thing, the perpetuation of the intifada. This is due to some of the **psychological and economic** dimensions of the current intifada which as a cumulative force is still influencing the PLO movement, the Israeli leadership as well the world community.

The PLO movement, virtually without any political or military base in the region now looks upon intifada as the main vehicle of carrying the message of the Palestinian cause to the outside world. The uprising has rivetted world attention on the Palestinian question and world public opinion has moved in favour of the Palestinians in a measure unprecedented since the creation of Israel.

The intifada was instrumental in generating a positive response of the Arabs towards the Palestinians. Their long mutual suspicion and mistrust towards the Palestinians received a sympathetic gesture when they found their Palestinian compatriots in open conflict with the Israeli authority. Before the outbreak of intifada there has been a general feeling among the Arabs that the Palestinians talk too much and do too little about their cause. However, such feeling faded away when they found the Palestinians as "the Arab man or woman". Palestine is now truly and not just verbally the "the Arab cause".¹⁶⁴

As a result of Israel's persecutory policy, and use of violence many Palestinian lives have been lost and the world views with contempt the television pictures of Israel's oppressive acts in the occupied territories which are of daily occurrence now. According to UN figures about 30,000 Palestinians have been wounded by gunfire and over 700 killed till October 1989.¹⁶⁵ This Israeli act has cast dark shadow on their sense of morality and human values. The world now seems to look at Israel through a different prism

163. Ibid., p. 577.

164. Amrita Bazar Patriks, 29 October 1989.

165. Ibid.

which reveals their hatred for Israeli acts of state terrorism coupled with a deep sympathy for the unarmed Palestinians. The Palestinians feel that their activities don't constitute terrorism as throwing stones is not a crime. On the other hand, the Israeli authorities look at the activities of the resistance masses as one of civil disobedience responsible for continuing chaos and unrest in the country.

However, despite mounting acts of Israeli repression, a fierce, vibrant pride in the Palestinian nationalist identity has not yet been lost. Rather, a self-sustaining Palestinian society has come to exist in the occupied territories in a more coherent way. It may be mentioned here that although all educational institutions in the West Bank and Gaza strip remain closed due to the present uprising, an underground education system is functioning as part of an alternative economic and administrative structure manned by the Palestinians themselves.¹⁶⁶ As indicated earlier the ties between the PLO outside and the Palestinian fighters have been cemented further as a result of the intifada and many of the anti-Arafat splinter groups have not been able to scratch the unity of the internal resistance forces. At the same time the largest non-PLO group—the Hammas (a group of Muslim fundamentalists) have sided with the cause of the intifada as it involves the question of survival of the Palestinian people as a whole.¹⁶⁷ All these have significantly enhanced the political stature of Yasser Arafat. The PLO leader seems to be having firm confidence in the internal resistance forces about their firm conviction for a separate Palestine homeland.

Another important effect that seems to be accruing at least a sort of psychological benefit for the PLO movement is the visible polarization of the Israeli society into two camps—one seeking compromise

166. Ibid.

167. Ibid.

and adjustment with the Palestinians while the other stands against any such compromise. According to some calculations and public opinion polls, over 50% of Israelis would have no objection in talking to the PLO or in having the Palestinian state established¹⁶⁶ It may be mentioned here that ever since the time Israel went into peace treaty with Egypt, several national debates took place in Israel over the the political fate of Israel as well of the Palestinians. These debates mostly centered around three schools of thought. Among these **The Dovish School** and the **Hawish-Maximalist School** deserve attention. The Dovish School accepts the Palestinians as constituting a separate people with a right to have their acclaimed state in West Bank and Gaza strip. **The Hawkish School-Maximalist School**, on the other hand, advocates its strict adherence to the orthodox Zionist ideology denouncing the Palestinians as a people without land. It also challenges the authenticity of the Palestinian phenomenon.¹⁶⁰ It seems the intifada has given the adherents of first school of thought an unique opportunity to advocate for the cause of the Palestinians as moderate and realistic attitudes are being exhibited by the PLO at present. But this group remains adumbrated by the hawkish groups who have failed to take into cognizance the new reality and change. It may be noted here that it is not only the Jews inside Israel who expressed their sympathy for the Palestinians, but the Jews in diaspora, particularly in the US, have also formed a formidable opposition group to mount protests and express indignation against continued Israeli acts of repression and violence, The polarization has also taken place in some of the countries where the Jews form a minority community. The intifada seems to have demoralized the Israeli military forces as well. Major General Menachem Einam, the army's logistics chief is reported to have complained that Israel's efforts to quell the Palestinian uprising could damage the moral standard

168. Ibid.

169. See for details, Rony Gabbay, op. cit., pp. 55-61.

of Israel's soldiers. Moreover, it could be a serious threat to Israel's image in the world which is already at its low ebb.¹⁷⁰

Of all the benefits the intifada has so far yielded to PLO, perhaps more profound has been the adverse effects of the uprising on Israel's economy. In the economic and financial sectors, the impact is quantifiable. Low productivity, staggering inflation, unemployment, drop in foreign investment, decline in tourism, labour unrest and non-functioning of financial institutions are some of the trends being reflected in present Israel's economy. The uprising that takes a large chunk of Israel's expenditures on military head has been a direct cause of the present decline in its economy. Official Israeli figures show that in 1988 the uprising cost Israelis nearly \$660 m due to increased military expenditures.¹⁷¹ Despite the austerity programme to cut down inflation and promote production, the Israeli government has not been able to deal with the severe blows to its economy at the macro level by the uprising. Statistics for 1988 show that GSP (Goods and Services Produced) rose by only 1.6 per cent, the slowest growth since 1982 and sharp drop from the 5.2 per cent GDP growth recorded in 1987. As a result unemployment rate rose high and the consumers were hard hit economically.¹⁷² In the first few months of 1989, Israel's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) did not show any growth in Israel's economy. Exports and imports fell significantly with a corresponding decline in private investment, internal consumption and industrial production. Unemployment rose to 8.2 per cent in March 1989 after an average of 6.4 per cent last year.¹⁷³

The economy of Israel at present is now affected by several factors. *First*, the Palestinians which constitute a large pool of cheap labour are remaining away from their jobs in Israeli factories and production units. *Second*, underground leaders of the uprising

170. Gleanings from the press, February, 1989, p. 62.

171. The Tide (Weekly), July 30, 1989.

172. Ibid.

173. Ibid.

have advised the Palestinians to boycott Israeli goods. *Third*, the market for Israeli goods in the occupied territories has declined greatly in part because of the estimated 25% decline in income there. *Fourth*, the political unrest and instability in the occupied territories have curtailed down the investment opportunities of various local and foreign firms in various developmental projects and plans. *Fifth*, the continuing violence and abnormal atmosphere has disrupted the functioning of a number of financial institutions in the occupied territories. *Lastly*, non-payment of taxes by the Palestinians has brought down the revenue to a significant amount.

While many of the peripheral gains achieved by Arafat due to intifada have increased the momentum of PLO movement, the fact remains that his declaration of an independent state in the occupied territories—the cardinal aim of the movement, still seems to remain in a nebulous state. In this sense, the intifada has not yet influenced the Israeli government to accept the PLO contention that negotiation must be based on Israel's acceptance of the Palestinian state principle as an ultimate outcome.

Meanwhile, the intifada, symbolically termed as the 'stone revolution' simmers in the occupied territories with renewed intensity and vigour. Its continuation, at the same time, perplexes Yasser Arafat who now seems to have the formidable challenge in his hand to translate into reality the goal of his movement.

INTIFADA AT PRESENT : A CURRENT REVIEW OF THE PALESTINE PROBLEM

The intifada, indeed, has given Arafat an opportunity to extend an olive branch to Israel for a constructive and comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian issue. While the PLO has already taken recourse to a policy of moderation and compromise on the Palestine issue, no sign of Israel's compromise and flexibility on the issue seems to be in sight. It is rather obfuscating the problem in a new direction.

In this connection, the policies of three significant parties to the issue, the PLO, the USA and Israel will be dealt with in this section. The purpose is to draw into attention the asymmetrical and incompatible ways of dealing with the problem by the mentioned parties—a factor that remains to be the greatest impediment on the way of a possible resolution of the conflict. Such avowed differences are mainly due to the differences in perception of the nature and solution of the problem. As mentioned earlier, the PLO and its philosophy have always been a source of anxiety and an anathema to both Israel and the US. Thus, Yasser Arafat had always endeavoured to count the support of the US whose role has, perhaps, the greatest weightage in any move towards a solution of the Palestinian problem. However, despite some of the rational steps taken by the PLO so far to assuage both Israel and the US, the fact appears glaringly clear that both the sides are moving in a diametrically opposite direction. Their recent policies and postures after the intifada can better elucidate the present state of affairs.

At the outset, mention may be made about Arafat's newly proclaimed state in the West Bank and Gaza strip which the PLO considers as the only irreversible solution to the present problem followed by his three point initiative enunciated immediately after the proclamation. The outlining features of the new state as envisaged by Arafat are (i) essentially an Arab state (ii) peace loving and committed to the principles of peaceful co-existence (iii) believing in the settlement of international disputes. To back up his move, his three point peace initiative calls for (i) a conference for peace in the Middle East under the supervision of the Security Council (ii) the placing of occupied Palestine under temporary UN supervision to protect Palestinian people and to supervise the withdrawal of Israeli forces. (iii) the seeking by the PLO of a comprehensive settlement among the parties concerned in the Arab-Israeli conflict, including the state of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours within the framework of peace in the Middle East on the basis of UN resolutions 242

and 338 so as to guarantee equality and the balance of interests, especially the PLO's rights of freedom, national independence and respect for right to exist in peace and security for all.¹⁷⁴

It may be mentioned here that the decision made at the 19th PNC was a realistic acknowledgment that things cannot remain as they were forty years ago. Thus, Arafat had to settle for a mere 23 per cent of mandated Palestine, making a concession by giving up claim to 77 per cent of the territory.¹⁷⁵ However, the grand territorial compromise could hardly influence Israel to reciprocate in a similar manner. On strictly security ground, Israel totally rejected Arafat's plan terming it as simply a nightmare. Israel viewed the PLO's new approach as mainly a tactical one and not a genuine expression of conciliation.¹⁷⁶ Its strong opposition to the plan was starkly stated in the programme of the new Likud-Labour coalition that followed one month after the declaration of an independent state in the occupied territories. The programme contained the following steps (i) Israel will not withdraw from occupied lands in exchange for peace despite UN resolution 242. It will add eight more Israeli settlements on the West Bank to the 130 or more already in existence (ii) Israel will never accept a Palestinian state (iii) Israel will never negotiate with the PLO (iv) Israel will continue to use an iron fist to repress the Palestinians and try to destroy the current intifada.¹⁷⁷

However, Israel's rejection of the two state formula is not a new phenomenon. As mentioned earlier, during the seventies when Arafat floated the two state formula as a concession to Israel, Israel rejected the plan totally and in the subsequent period the autonomy scheme under the Camp David agreement put a seal on any such idea. At the same time, the US policy despite many of the new elements in the Palestinian equation, the intifada, the end of the

174. Gleanings from the Press, February, 1989.

175. Philip Mattar, "The Critical Moment for Peace", Foreign Policy, No. 76, Fall 1989, p. 143.

176. Strategic Survey, op. cit.

177. Gleanings from the Press, February, 1989.

Jordanian option, PLO's moderation and realism and more important, the US's opening to the PLO, shows little of an equitable attitude towards the diplomatic positions of the two sides. President George Bush like his predecessors in the US administration, seems to throw his full support behind the Israeli position on the issue. It may be mentioned here that as Vice President of the US he was reported to have expressed his strong opposition to the creation of an independent Palestinian state which is believed to be inimical to the security interests of the US and Israel.¹⁷⁸ Thus, no new outlook has been evinced by the present US administration to advance the peace process.

While the divergent outlooks of the main parties to the conflict at present put an insurmountable challenge to the issue, it naturally behoves one to ask in what direction is the actual course of events moving to resolve the issue. Ironically, it will be found that the present plan for peace in the region falls far short of the Palestinian demand for a separate homeland in the occupied territories as envisioned by Arafat.

With full realization in mind that Arafat has nothing more to offer and that he is tactically dependent on intifada at present, Israel seems to be buying time to contain the intifada so that the PLO withers away once for all. In this connection, Israel's wanton acts of repression remain unabated. So alarming has been the situation that the issue was taken up in the Security council in early part of 1989 to pass a resolution that would have condemned Israeli policies and practices in the occupied territories.¹⁷⁹ However, the resolution could not be passed due to a veto by the US in favour of Israel. Afterwards, the US in union with the other members of the Security Council passed a resolution calling upon Israel to refrain from deporting any Palestinian civilian from the occupied territories and

178. Gleanings from the Press, September, 1988.

179. For the rights of Palestinians, A UN Publication, 1989.

to abide by its obligations arising from the Geneva convention.¹⁸⁰ The Israeli acts of repression did not fail to draw the attention of the Commission of Human Rights also as manifested in its resolution passed in 1989. Besides, in early 1989, the twelve foreign ministers of the EEC issued a harsh statement deploring "the repressive measures taken by Israel in violation of international law and human rights" and demanded that these measures must stop. The Non-aligned movement, the OIC, the Arab League and a number of non-governmental organizations also played their respective steadfast role in condemning Israeli acts of repression and supporting the Palestinian struggle for their national self-determination. But unfortunately, no effort has yet been successful in creating an effect on the present Israeli leadership to end its iron fist policy and go for a slightest compromise with the PLO. As result, Israel has now taken a new initiative that encapsulates the old idea of autonomy with a new coating in sharp contrast to the policy and goal of the PLO. At the same time, the US seems to be sending confusing signals on the Middle East through its Secretary of State, James Baker. However, the PLO has nothing more to offer as Arafat himself said, "I have now only the fig leaf left. Do I have to end the striptease"?¹⁸¹ Thus, the PLO's policy at present is simply to control the centripetal forces acting against its movement.

The peace plan that Shamir initiated in April 1989 calls for elections in the occupied territories and an eventual Camp David type of autonomy. The elected representatives as he envisaged would have to recognize the whole scheme of a peaceful initiative in two stage negotiations with Israel. In the first stage, there would be a self-government for approximately five years, while in the second stage Israel would have talks without any precondition on the final solution of the conflict.¹⁸² The conditions that are to precede such an

180. World Focus, September, 1989.

181. Gleaning from the Press, July, 1989.

182. New Times, a Soviet Weekly of World Politics, October 17-23, 1989.

initiative seem to indicate another political ploy by Israel to undermine the PLO movement totally. It spells out the exclusion of East Jerusalem residents from the elections, termination of the intifada as a precondition for negotiations, continuation of the Jewish settlement drive in the occupied territories, rejection of a Palestinian state, and no negotiations with the PLO.¹⁸³

As it appears, direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians seem to form the basis on which the peace initiative of Shamir has been structured. It, thus, totally shuns the idea of an international conference supported by the PLO and other countries including the Soviet Union. In this connection, it may be relevant here to mention that this new move of Israel has been influenced by the 'concept of ripening process' advocated by the pro-Israeli think tank of the US that opposes an international conference to be attended by all concerned parties including the US and the USSR as mediators. It rather advises Israel to start a ripening process that would allow her to permit free elections in the territories to produce a representative Palestinian leadership to negotiate on an autonomous entity.¹⁸⁴

If direct negotiations is the main contention held by the US and Israel, then the question naturally arises why then is the PLO excluded from this process? The reasons for this are not far to seek. From an Israeli perspective, any dealing with the PLO creates a fear that it goes a long way toward accepting the legitimacy of Palestinian aspirations for a separate state that might create a moral danger for Israel. Besides, many in Israel despite the reality of intifada, stubbornly argue that PLO has little authority in the occupied territories hoping that the organization would ultimately fade away before negotiation on final status begins. This group still keeps its faith alive in an emergence of a local leadership that may not pay any support to the PLO in future. Furthermore, the rigid attitude of the Israeli leaders witnessed no change ever after the renunciation

183. Philip Mattar, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

184. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

of terrorism by the PLO, a pledge made by Arafat to the US. Thus, the PLO in Israel's eye even today stands as a disorganized and fragmented organization of terrorists.¹⁸⁵

The explanations given by the present Israeli leadership to discount the participation of PLO in the peace process are mainly the reflections of Israel's denial of the Palestinian cause as repeatedly shown in the past. Its pathological obsession with the autonomy concept seems to remain intact till today. The concept seems to be repeated in different shape and form only. Thus, the so called autonomy plan, shrouded in a cloud of dense confusion and ambiguity could never court the favour of PLO ever since the time it was floated in the region. Consequently, the Shamir's peace plan was outrightly rejected by the PLO. In the opinion of Yasser Arafat, "the Shamir plan was not designed for the Palestinian people. In fact, Palestinians are not even mentioned in it. They are not even called Palestinians, but population only".¹⁸⁶ In particular, the US backing of the Shamir plan has been a discomforting factor to the PLO leader. Although, Arafat has not achieved anything substantial out of the past four rounds of Palestinian-US dialogue, he still thinks the ball lies in the American court to restart a new peace process in the region. In this connection, the latest Baker plan deserves little attention.

As is known, James Baker, the US secretary of state has always been in favour of a greater evenhandedness in US policy towards the region that should attempt to look at the origin of the Arab dispute from a Palestinian perspective or to comprehend Palestinian as well as Israeli grievances.¹⁸⁷ His latest plan is aimed at bringing forward a meeting between Palestinians and Israel to decide the modalities of the elections. As it stands, the Baker plan does not

185. Gidon Gottlieb, "Israel and the Palestinians", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 4, 1989 Fall, p. 111.

186. *New Times*, October 17-23, 1989.

187. Philip Mattar, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

deal substantially with the overall nature of the crisis, but it does offer a way out of the impasse by dwelling on the election theme for the West Bank and Gaza for sometime. However, both Israel and the PLO have shown little interest in the plan so far on their respective accounts. The Israelis as before don't want to come to a negotiation with the PLO. As suggested by her, the Palestinian delegation could comprise the people chosen by her from the occupied territories. More pressing is the Israeli demand that the talk would not go beyond the orbit of autonomy plan. Contrary to Israel's position, the PLO's foremost demand is the participation of the PLO in such talks including the Palestinians from East Jerusalem, the capital of proclaimed state. On Israel's outright denial of PLO participation, Arafat's remark is a quotable one when he said, "with whom they (Israelis) will have talks? With ghost or with invisible delegation"?¹⁸⁸ With full PLO participation, the PLO demands the talks to include the vital question of the Palestinian right of self-determination followed by Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories—a demand that the present leadership in Israel is not willing to concede. Moreover, the very idea of election, the priority issue in Baker's plan is an anathema to the PLO leader. To the PLO, the election as planned by Israeli leader appears to be unrealistic in view of many considerations, like there is no guarantee of a fair and free election, the exclusion of the Palestinians of East Jerusalem from the election, the goal of election is not commensurate with the PLO goal, an absence of Israeli commitment to call for international supervision of the polls. Moreover, the PLO is quite aware that the intifada masses are not in favour of an election realizing the fact that the sham of an election plan put forward by Shamir is aimed at ending the intifada and bypassing the PLO. Thus, it remains to be seen what possibilities the Baker plan can bring about to bring both the parties to a talk in the midst of such odds.

188. *The Bangladesh Observer*, January 20, 1990.

In connection with the Palesting problem, the recent peace initiative of Egypt deserves mentioning, although Israel has not responded to it till now. The Egytian proposal is a ten point package among which, election, the end of Israel's Kibbutzim (repression) policy in the occupied territories and the land for peace stand out to be the prominent ones. However, it can probably be assumed that Israel will not give a favourable consideration to it as the package stands in favour of the PLO.¹⁸⁹ But the move is indicative of an important trend—the reushering of Egypt in Middle Eastern politics once again, particularly in context to the Palestine problem. It may be noted here that Egypt has recently been able to come out of its long isolation caused due to its ostracization from Arab politics following the Camp David accord in the late seventise.

It is now clear that the parties to the conflict are moving in opposite direction with little sign of compromise. While Israel talks from a position of strength, the PLO remains vulnerable to a number of acts, especially of the US from the outside and Israel from within the region. More particularly, the role of the US so far has not created any ground to compel Israel to acquiesce to a permanent solution of the problem. What appears now is a Palestinian feeling that the US is giving Shamir some time in his hand to fulfill his promise to liquidate the intifada as Arafat himself remarked, "It is now very clear that the US is behind the rejectionist stand of the Israeli government".¹⁹⁰

Meanwhile, an ominous development in recent times is beginning to cast its dark shadow on the prospect of an early solution of the Palestine problem. As reported, the prospect of 50,000 to 100,000 Soviet Jews moving to Israel this year and between 250,000 to 750,000 over the next five years is causing fundamental rethinking about the demographic and political balance in the region. Such mass influx of Soviet Jews to Israel amounts to a flagrant aggression

189. New Times, October 17-13, 1989.

190. Gleaning from the Press, July, 1989.

against the rights of the Palestinians that may block the peace efforts in future.¹⁹¹

As it appears, the Israeli government's open door policy to welcome the new exodus of Jews from the Soviet Union and other East European countries is based on a number of calculations.

First, the flow of new arrivals may be used by the Israeli hard liners as a justification for holding onto the Arab territories. Shamir who is known for masterminding this horrendous scheme is of the opinion that as the Jews coming from the communist world will be free to settle in the occupied territories, the need for 'big Israel' remains to be permanent¹⁹²

Second, Israel is harbouring on a long term strategy to eliminate the demographic weapon of the Arab Palestinians. At present there are 3.7 million Jews and 650,000 Arabs inside Israel's pre-1967 borders and 1.75 million Palestinians in the occupied territories. Because of high birth rate of the Arabs, the percentage of Jews in the population of Israel dropped from 83.1 to 18 during the 1980s. Israeli demographers estimate that unless 60,000 Jewish immigrants arrive annually for the rest of the century Arabs will account for 43% of the population in Israel and the occupied territories by the year 2000. As is being speculated, the policy of Israel government in this respect would reverse the demographic status quo and might be an additional step in the process of the dispossession of the Palestinians.¹⁹³

Third, Shamir who has floated the controversial election plan as a part of his peace initiative expects to control the votes of most of the new emigres if ever such election is held¹⁹⁴ *Finally*, the Israeli government sees it as a boon for more aid and assistance from the US. It may be mentioned here that Israel is seeking 500 million dollars from the US to guarantee housing loans to the Soviet Jewish

191. Turkish Daily, February 01, 1990.

192. The Khaleej Times, January 17, 1990.

193. Newsweek, January 22, 1990.

194. Ibid.

emigres.¹⁹⁵ This would enable her to rehabilitate some important sectors of her economy hard hit by the current intifada in the occupied territories.

The new exodus of the Jews to Israel has caused genuine concern in the Arab world who fear that this demographic aggression may soon turn into a new political dynamite in the region like the one in the thirties. Most of the Arab countries, as it appears now, are trying to internationalize the issue so that it gets proper attention in such world and regional forums like the UN, the NAM, the Arab League and the OIC indicating the great danger that the new Jewish scheme is charged with. It is now being speculated that the fresh settlements in the occupied territories may further complicate the situation and make the search for peace more difficult in this region. Besides, they might provoke the Palestinians and spawn new tensions leading to greater trouble in the region.¹⁹⁶

CONCLUSION

An attempt to draw a conclusion on an unresolved and seeming intractable problem like Palestine with many of the developments yet to unfold, is not easy an undertaking. The problem as it stands today in its peculiar shape and form, precipitates a little ray of hope and optimism among the analysts and observers about its quick resolution. However, pessimism can still turn into optimism if only the problem is viewed from a broader perspective that takes into account the present phenomenon of peace that is breaking out all over at the international level. This new realization can only lead the main parties to the conflict to grapple with the new reality to breakthrough their divergent approaches to the problem in particular and discordant ambitions in the region as a whole.

The world as it appears now is experiencing a colossal change largely facilitated by such positive developments as the improved

195. Ibid.

196. The Khaleej Times, January 17, 1990.

US-Soviet relations in the form of new detente, the new rapprochement between the USSR and China, intensification and strengthening of UN peace keeping role, a new focus on human rights, more international concern for economic, social and environmental issues. A few positive manifestations of this new change are the efforts in recent times to resolve such issues like the Afghan occupation, the Gulf war, the Kampuchea issue, the Angolan crisis, the Nicaraguan issue, the Namibian independence and the release of Nelson Mandela, the crusader against apartheid in South Africa. Besides, the monumental changes sweeping across the continent of Europe do indicate an important trend that the nations in the international community need to act in the light of existing political realities that may offer them new opportunities or challenges. Thus, we find with emergence of Gorbachev phenomenon, a process of dramatic transformation is undergoing at present in East Europe with far reaching socio-economic and politico-strategic consequences for the continent in particular and the world as a whole. While a spirit of accommodation, co-existence, dialogue and consultation is enveloping the entire global community, it is rather a matter of dismay and anguish that the Palestine issue still remains to be influenced by such positive ramifications in international politics.

In view of the above, what can only be demanded from the conflicting parties to the Palestine problem is to conform to the new reality and act with a new spirit to deal with the issue. The Palestinians need to look at Israel's problem from an Israeli perspective and at the same time Israelis need to look at the Palestinian problem from a Palestinian perspective. Amidst this, the US has to adopt a more flexible and non-prejudiced policy that should restrain itself from encouraging a party that opposes real compromise over a party that is willing to make concessions. Perhaps, it can no longer credibly operate on the principle that Israeli people have a right to independence at the cost of Palestinian right of independence, nor can it remain impervious to the

fact that the Palestine itself is an entity whose independence and safe existence in one of the world's most strategically important regions is a vital prerequisite for durable peace and stability in this region. The Soviet Union which has been giving unwavering support to the Palestinian people and leadership in their struggle for right of self-determination, also in recent time continued to improve relations with Israel. This new outlook has placed the Soviet Union in a favourable position that can influence the present Soviet leadership to initiate an active peace process in the region afresh, despite its present preoccupation with the domestic as well as the East European developments. The activists strongly feel that at a time when the US initiative to lend substance to the Shamir peace plan for occupied territories has all but collapsed, a determined move by Moscow can be made to convince the US of the urgent necessity of convening an international peace conference with the participation of the PLO on an equal footing.

While the declaration of an independent state and its recognition by a host of nations has been a diplomatic triumph for the PLO, the fact remains that in real politik, a Palestinian homeland on the West Bank and Gaza strip seems to remain in an incumbative stage at present. Till now, Arafat has not been able to address such problematical issues, like the security dilemma of Israel, the question of Jewish settlements, the status of Jerusalem nor has he been able to project the viability of his proclaimed state politically, strategically and economically. In this connection, perhaps, it would be right to comment that Israel has not given Arafat the opportunity to discuss such issues despite the politics of moderation and flexibility exhibited by him during the period of intifada. The world is yet to witness an event when these two principal parties to the conflict sit together in the same table to decide themselves the destiny of their people. It is now the foremost political requirement of the day that both the PLO and Israel sit together in the same table to talk about each other's problem and position on issues like, self-determination,

autonomy, independence, settlement, refugee problem and a host of others. Until such a talk is held to make an appraisal of each other's policy, no substantive result can be expected out of the present imbroglio over the Palestinian problem.

The question that now looms large is that if Israel—the super-nuclear power in middle East with a nuclear capability, satellite and inter-mediate range missiles, does not concede Arafat's plan, what more concession then the PLO can make? The answer is not probably a war as an alternative to it as such explosion will leave nothing but ruins in its wake. Thus, diplomacy will continue to remain as the main instrument at the disposal of the PLO movement until such time when a sense of realism and moderation prevails upon the leadership of Israel to go for a compromise with the Palestinians.

Meanwhile, intifada which is getting intensified day by day with corresponding Israeli atrocities on the masses, will continue to remain as the main tactical and strategic support to Arafat's movement for a separate homeland of the Palestinians. This requires a continued replenishment of the movement with both political and material support from all quarters—especially from the region where Pan-Arab support for the movement now is qualitatively different from the one given to the PLO in the early years of its movement.

The paper is concluded with the very words of Arafat, "We derive strength not only from our firmness, but also from our faith in a bright future for the Palestinian people. The dawn of freedom is yet to rise over Palestine. But we believe this day will come."¹⁹⁷ Till then, the world has just to wait to see a new state of Palestine risen like a phoenix.

197. *New Times*, October 17-23, 1989.

Annex I
U.N. PARTITION PLAN—1947 AND
U.N. ARMISTICE LINES—1949



Source:—The Need for Convening The International Peace Conference on The Middle East— U N Publication, Newyork, 1989, P. 52.

Annex II

TERRITORIES OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL SINCE JUNE 1967



The territory presently occupied and administered by Israel includes the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and the Syrian Golan Heights. The West Bank and Gaza are bounded by the armistice lines negotiated by a United Nations mediator in 1949. They were overrun in 1967.

Source:—The Need for Convening the International Peace Conference on The Middle East—U. N. Publication Newyork, 1989, P. 56.