Chapter VI
The Accord Diplomacy: Towards An Independent State in Palestine

PLO's Pre-Accord Diplomacy

The intifada yielded results much faster than any other event in the history of Palestinian revolution. Indeed, the intifada had made psychological and political pole vault setting in motion a series of very significant diplomatic developments involving the Palestine question. The direct outcome of the intensification of the intifada were:


2. The Declaration of the Palestinian State at the 19th session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) in Algiers between 12 to 15 November 1988.

3. 43rd Session of U.N. General Assembly shifted to Geneva to enable Yasser Arafat to participate.

4. The U.S. opened dialogue with the PLO on 16 December 1988.


6. Last but not the least, Israel-PLO Peace Accord was signed on 13 September 1993 in Washington.

Impact of Intifada

The intifada made all other peace proposals irrelevant. The Palestinians were flooded with the politics of "points", "counter points" and "assumptions". As Walid Khalidi described it in 1990:
Seldom since medieval times, when scholars (Talmudic, Quranic, or Scriptural) burnt the midnight oil piling commentary upon text, has a diplomatic document generated as many exegetical glosses as has Shamir's twenty-point plan: Mubarak's ten points on Shamir's twenty, Aren's comments on Mubarak's points, Baker's five-point framework on the Mubarak and Aren's points, the "assumption" of Israel, Egypt, and the PLO about Baker's five points, etc.

The intifada did not care about these peace proposals, for it had made its political agenda clear right from the beginning through its regular leaflets: end to the Israeli occupation and establishment of an independent, sovereign Palestinian State. The intifada wanted its display window (PLO's Tunis office) to launch the diplomatic offensive. It was as if the PLO leadership was waiting for the mass uprising in the occupied territories to translate the intifada into a diplomatic victory. The leadership of Yasser Arafat knew very well when to show the gun and the olive branch. This time Arafat did not have to show the gun. The world had, despite the Israeli restrictions on the mediapersons, seen the Palestinian women, children and young people's stones. The children had shown the V for Victory.

signs with their nimble fingers before the TV cameras. The Israeli reply to the stone throwing innocent people was firing of submachine guns, sten guns, torture, beating etc. in front of the TV cameras. The world saw these scenes for five years on the nightly TV news bulletins. The world public opinion, which never cared to listen to the cries and screams of the snivelling Palestinians, saw the reality, the truth about the ugly face of Zionism. The world realised that it was not the state of Israel - ensconced behind the anti-semitic veil - which needs protection and security but the innocent men, women and children who should be protected. *Intifada* was, indeed, the biggest un-official diplomatic victory for the Palestinians. Conscience began to bite within the Western World. The PLO leadership moved fast as soon as it was convinced that the *intifada* would not stop until Israel vacates the occupied territories and Palestinians establish their independent state.

After their evacuation from Beirut in 1982 Yasser Arafat had said that the PLO had two weapons through which the Palestinians could force Israel to vacate the occupied territories:
a) The fact that Palestinians are not afraid of dying in the war whereas the Israelis are:

b) The possibility that the PLO would accept U.N. Security Council resolution 242.(2)

The on-going intifada was a strong proof that the Palestinians had conquered death. In June 1982 Arafat opened his secret diplomatic card. It was not used earlier because the PLO was in a weak position. It was a secret to be opened, when the Palestinians turn the strategic balance against Israel. The intifada did accomplish that task.

In June 1988, the PLO made an important diplomatic move through its spokesman, Bissam Abu Sharif, who said the key to the Palestinian-Israeli settlement was through negotiations between the two parties to the conflict. Abu Sharif said that the PLO accepted Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) within the framework of a U.N. resolution that recognised the Palestinian people's right.3

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2. Author's interview with Faical Aweidha, PLO Ambassador to India, in October 1982.

Jordan's Relinquishment of West Bank

PLO's position was further strengthened by the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's decision to sever its legal and administrative links with the Israeli-occupied West Bank on 31 July 1988. King Hussein said that maintaining the legal and administrative relationship with the West Bank would be "an obstacle to the Palestinian struggle which seeks to win international support for the Palestine question, considering that it is a just national issue of a people struggling against foreign occupation." The King made it clear that Jordan would support the Palestinians' steadfastness and its uprising until they achieve their national objective.

King Hussein's statement put an end to the so called 'Jordanian option' which Israel and the U.S. were planning since the Israeli occupation of West Bank in 1967. Under this scheme West Bank was to be federated with Jordan. This was a victory for the intifada which had said through its leaflets and the graffiti that neither do they want Shekel (Israeli currency) nor Jordanian dinar; they want Arafat's currency.

Arafat's Diplomatic Offensive

From August till the end of 1988, the PLO launched its diplomatic offensive with the aim of dragging the U.S. to the negotiating table. He made his move through the U.N. which had been consistently supporting the inalienable rights of the Palestinians since 1969. On 28 August 1988 Yasser Arafat met at Geneva the U.N. Secretary General and discussed with him the situation in the occupied territory and prospects of political and material assistance the U.N. could extend to the Palestinian people.5

PLO's next move was in Western Europe. Yasser Arafat had cultivated good relationship with the Western Europe since the 1970s. European Community (EC) had gone to the extent of recognising the PLO on 13 June 1980 in Venice.6 But it was withheld because of the pressure from the U.S. Time was ripe for the PLO to open the EC diplomatic card to pressurise the U.S. With this in mind Yasser Arafat addressed a meeting of the Socialist Group of the European Parliament at Strasbourg, France, on 13 September 1988. The PLO Chairman dwelt at length on the plight of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation. Arafat explained them

5. Ibid.
Declaration of the Palestinian State

November and December 1988 witnessed some dramatic developments which became the basis of PLO's diplomacy for statehood. On 15 November 1988 the 19th session of the Palestine National Council (PNC) in its emergency meeting in Algiers proclaimed the Independent State of Palestine. The Palestinians called this session, from 12 to 15 November, the session of the intifada and national independence. The session was dedicated to Abu Jihad who was assassinated by the Israelis on 16 April 1988.

The session adopted two landmark documents, namely "The Political Communique of the Palestine National Council" and "The Declaration of Independence."

The document "the Declaration of Independence" referred to several international legal instruments in which provisions for the establishment of a Palestinian State had been made. It pointed out, inter alia, that, "despite the historical injustice done to the Palestinian Arab people in its displacement and in being deprived of the right to self-determination following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 1947, which partitioned Palestine into an Arab and Jewish State, that
the intifada, the popular uprising of the Palestinians in the occupied territory. Firing his diplomatic salvo, he outlined the position taken by the PLO for a peaceful settlement of the conflict. He stated that the PLO could only agree to the convening of the international Peace Conference on the Middle East under the auspices of the U.N. with the participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the parties to the conflict in the region, including the PLO and Israel, on the basis of two options, namely, all the resolutions dealing with the Palestine question, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), along with the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, first and foremost of which is its right to self-determination. 7

On 30 September 1988, the U.N. Secretary General submitted a report in an effort to convene an International Peace Conference on the Middle East. All the members of the Security Council also believed that convening such an international conference was desirable. 8 On 3 November Intifada session of the U.N. General Assembly was held and censured Israel for human rights violations.

7. See The Origins and Evolution of the Palestine Problem, no. 3, p. 262.
8. Ibid., pp. 262-63.
resolution nevertheless continues to attach conditions to international legitimacy that guarantee the Palestinian Arab people the right to sovereignty and national independence. 9

The Declaration further states: "By virtue of the natural, historical and legal right of the Palestinian Arab people to its homeland, Palestine, and of the sacrifices of its succeeding generations in defence of the freedom and independence of that homeland, "Pursuant to the resolutions of the Arab Summit Conference and on the basis of the international legitimacy embodied in the resolutions of the United Nations since 1947, and "Through the exercise by the Palestinian Arab people of its right to self-determination, political independence and sovereignty over its territory: "The Palestine National council hereby declared, in the name of God and on behalf of the Palestinian Arab people, the establishment of the State of Palestine in the land of Palestine with its capital at Jerusalem." 10

9. Ibid., p. 265.
10 Ibid., pp. 265-66.
The Declaration outlined the principal characteristics of the new Palestinian State:

The State of Palestine is the state of all Palestinians everywhere. On its soil, they shall develop their national and cultural identity, enjoy equal rights. Their religious and political conventions and their human dignity shall be protected and respected under a democratic, parliamentary system of government ensuring freedom of expression and forming political parties with the minority honouring the rule of majority. The Government shall respect the principles of social justice, equality and indiscrimination in public rights based on race, religion, colour or sex through a constitution ensuring the sovereignty of law, the independence of Judiciary in conformity with the spiritual and civilizational heritage and traditions of tolerance and co-existence among religions throughout the century. 11

The proclamation of the State of Palestine was an important diplomatic move. It was like the declaration of Government-in-exile, ready to assert the responsibility of a state. It was done to present the world with a Palestinian State whose Government was the PLO which was ready to carry on negotiations as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. Soon after the declaration 100 countries recognised the Palestine State.

However, a section of the PLO led by the PFLP leader George Habash opposed this kind of peace initiatives. The question of Palestinian pride plays an implicit but crucial role in the Palestinian community. Habash described Arafat's peace initiative as a "policy of concessions", and as a "striptease" in which Palestinians were first asked to take off their shoes, and then their pants, and finally their underwear. Habash asked sarcastically: "And what do you think the Israelis are going to do next?" 12

The Declaration of Independence of Palestine was a psychological and diplomatic war declared against Israel. For the Israelis Palestinian State existed psychologically very much like the menace of the fedayeen. It was like Israel occupying Palestine physically, and the PLO occupying the minds of Israelis psychologically.

- Geneva Session of the U.N. General Assembly

The next dramatic development in the scenario was the shifting of U.N. General Assembly session to Geneva so as to enable Yasser Arafat to participate in the debate on the Palestine Question.

As the PLO Chairman's entry visa was refused by the U.S. on the grounds of a threat to its security, a legal battle followed between the U.N. and the host country the U.S. Yasser Arafat became a hero of the international politics and a darling of the world media. This in itself was a diplomatic victory as the encounter was between the mighty U.S., the Super Power, versus Yasser Arafat. How can a single individual be a threat to the U.S.? This was the question before the world public opinion. And if Arafat is a threat to the security of U.S. he is the most powerful man on earth.

The U.S. stand was deplored by the U.N. General Assembly as the host country failed to carry out its international obligation; and its 43rd session was held in Geneva from 13 to 15 December. 13

Chairman Yasser Arafat addressed the General Assembly on 13 December 1988 in Geneva giving a historical perspective of the Arab-Israeli conflict, in particular, the question of Palestine. He spoke about numerous peace plans and initiatives aimed at reaching a peaceful solution to the conflict, which had been proposed over the past decades.

He once again emphasised the crucial role the *intifada* played in the struggle of the Palestinian people for its rights and independence. Prominent attention was given in his speech to the decisions of the 19th extraordinary session of the PNC and repeated the peaceful solutions it offered through the U.N. resolutions. Arafat specifically referred to the position taken by the PNC on the issue of terrorism, stating that the session had reiterated its rejection of terrorism of all kinds, including State terrorism. This State terrorism obviously referred to the Israeli terrorism against the innocent Palestinian people.

The peace plan, offered by Arafat in his capacity as Chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO which was carrying out the functions of the provisional government of the State of Palestine, was warmly welcomed by nearly all countries who supported the Palestinian struggle for their inalienable rights. Every delegation called for the PLO's participation in any peace process aimed at finding a solution to the question of Palestine.

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The debate on this issue indicated the growing concern of the international community about the continuing attempts by the Israeli government to crush the intifada. There was sharp, pointed criticism of Israel's position on the Palestine question, its policies and practices towards the civilian Palestinians under occupation. Many delegations spoke in support of the newly established state of Palestine. The PLO's diplomacy succeeded in isolating Israel in the international community. It proved that Israel was an obstacle to peace and a rejectionist state that rejects all U.N. resolutions for a peaceful solution.

Arafat's Press Conference

On 14 December Arafat, at a news conference in Geneva - specially addressed to the U.S. - further specified the key points he had made in his statement before the General Assembly:

In my speech... yesterday, it was clear that we mean our people's rights to free and national independence, according to 181, and the right of all parties concerned in the Middle East conflict to exist in peace and security and, as I have mentioned, including the State of Palestine, Israel and other neighbours, according to resolutions 242 and 338. 16

15 Ibid.
By referring to the U.N. resolution 181 of 1947 - the partition of Palestine in which 43 percent of the country was allocated to the Arab State- Arafat gave the indication, without saying it explicitly, that they have a claim to a bigger area than just the Gaza Strip and West Bank including Jerusalem. However, the basis of convening the International Peace Conference could be the S.C. resolutions 242 and 338 which call Israel to vacate the territories it occupied in 1967.

The U.S. Opens Dialogue with PLO

Following Arafat's press conference in Geneva, there was an instant and dramatic response from the U.S. which opened a dialogue with the PLO in Tunis on 16 December, much to the chagrin and bewilderment of Israel. On 14 December 1988 the U.S. President Ronald Reagan made a statement on United States relations with the PLO in which, inter alia, he said:

The Palestine Liberation Organisation today issued a statement in which it accepted the United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, recognized Israel's right to exist and renounced terrorism. These have long been our conditions for a substantive dialogue. They have been met. Therefore, I have authorised the State Department to enter into a substantive dialogue with PLO representatives.17

President Reagan further said:

The initiation of a dialogue between the United States and the PLO representatives is an important step in the peace process, the more so because it represents the serious evolution of Palestinian thinking toward realistic and pragmatic positions on the key issue.18

The dual policy of the U.S. towards the PLO became evident next day, 15 December, when it voted against the two U.N. resolutions on Palestine. The first resolution (43/176) called for the convening of the International Peace Conference on Palestine under the U.N. auspices, with the participation of the PLO and permanent members of the Security Council, based on Security Council resolution 242 and 338 and the legitimate rights of the Palestinians, primarily the right to self-determination.19 It spelled out five principles: Israeli withdrawal from Palestinian territory occupied since 1967 including Jerusalem, and other occupied territories, security of all states in the region including those named in U.N. resolution 181 (II) of 1947 (Palestine) within secure and internationally recognised boundaries; resolving the Palestinian refugee problem as per resolution 194(III) of 1948; dismantling of Israeli settlements in the territories

18 Ibid.
occupied since 1967; and access to holy places.\textsuperscript{20} The resolution also called for the occupied territories to be placed under the U.N. supervision for a limited period as part of the peace process. It was adopted by overwhelming majority of 138 votes in favour to two against with two abstentions.

The second U.N. General Assembly resolution (43/177) acknowledged the proclamation of the State of Palestine by the PNC, the Palestinian sovereignty over their territory occupied since 1967, and the designation "Palestine" to be used in the U.N. system instead of the "PLO". It was adopted by 104 votes in favour to two against, with 36 abstentions.\textsuperscript{21} Only the U.S. and Israel voted against the resolutions. Explaining the U.S. position, its representative said that despite the positive developments on the basis of which his Government announced holding of "a substantive dialogue with the PLO", the U.S. opposed the international peace conference and insisted on "direct negotiations between the parties".\textsuperscript{22} Regarding the objection to the second resolution the U.S. representative said that his Government's decision to "engage in a substantive dialogue with the PLO "did not imply

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
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the U.S. recognition of "an independent Palestinian State". 23

However, without the U.S. formally recognising the PLO, the first meeting between the two took place the following day (16 December 1988) in the Tunisian town of Carthage. The PLO delegation was headed by Yasser Abed Rabbo and the U.S. by Robert H. Pelletreau, ambassador to Tunisia. Arafat's diplomatic moves paid its dividends. The important role played by Egypt, Sweden and European Economic Community (EEC) countries led by France, Spain and Greece in concretising the PLO-U.S. dialogue cannot be ignored; and the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Howe's claim that it was British diplomacy which moved the U.S. to break its deadlock with the PLO was unfounded. 24

Whatever might have been the outcome of the dialogue, the PLO rightly regarded it as a major break through. The first round of PLO-U.S. dialogue on 16 December 1988 showed that the Americans were still insisting on direct Arab-Israeli negotiations, and failing to make any substantial distinction between "armed resistance" and "terrorist acts".

23 Ibid.
These were two areas of disagreement on which the PLO could not compromise. Not only did it categorically reject direct negotiations with Israel but it was opposed to the idea of unilateral Palestinian-Israeli deals which excluded the major Arab confrontation states.\textsuperscript{25} The PLO also made it clear to the Americans that it was not ready to negotiate with the Israelis outside the framework of an international peace conference. While the PLO was ready to meet Israeli officials or Knesset members for discussions - these should not be regarded as part of official peace negotiations - it turned down the American ambassador's suggestion for Israeli-PLO talks. As for terrorism, the PLO expressed its unwillingness to renounce resistance against Israeli military targets and did not rule out the military options as long as the Israeli occupation continued.\textsuperscript{26}

\textbf{Arafat's Statement in Paris}

Another important diplomatic move - but a definite major concession - was made by Yasser Arafat on 2 May 1989 during his official visit to Paris.


\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
There he announced that the Palestine National Charter was *caduc* which in French means "null and void" of a contract, "barred by limitation" of a debt or "lapsed" of an insurance policy. This being the case there was no need to repeal formally the Articles of the Charter laying claim to the whole of Palestine.

The PFLP leader George Habash and PFLP - GC leader Ahmad Jibril condemned Arafat for this kind of statement. Habash told Radio Monte Carlo:

> Neither Arafat nor any leader can abrogate this Charter for which thousands of Palestinians have been martyred. If Arafat wants to annul the charter he should form his own organisation...

Despite this criticism from the PFLP and also from the PFLP, the PLO did not split.

The U.S. seemed to be satisfied with Arafat's declaration. The newly appointed Secretary of State James Baker told Israel to modify its rigid stance. In May Baker caused a sensation when he told the annual conference of the American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), the most

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28 Ibid.
powerful pro-Israeli lobby in the U.S., that the time had come for the Israelis "to lay aside, once and for all, the unrealistic vision of a greater Israel." 30

**Breakdown of the PLO - U.S. Dialogue**

What looked like a bright prospect for the Palestinians ended in smoke. The pro-Israeli lobby AIPAC responded to James Baker and the changing U.S. policy towards Palestine in a striking manner. In a naked display of its hold over the American Congress, 94 out of 100 senators were persuaded to join in urging the administration to support what was euphemistically described as Israel's "peace initiative", and a few days later the U.S. once again vetoed a resolution of the U.N. Security Council which would have censured Israel for its continuing violations of human rights in the occupied territories. 31 Once again the nascent peace process suffered setback, if not a death blow.

The euphoria of U.S. - PLO dialogue vanished within 18 months, when President George Bush announced on 20 June 1990 the suspension of the dialogue

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31 Ibid.
under the pretext that Palestinian Liberation Front (PFL) led by Abu Abbas launched a seaborne "terrorist infiltration" into Israel on 30 May 1990. President Bush said, "The size of the force and the geographical target area strongly indicate that civilians would have been the target." It was very much clear that no one was injured or killed in this "attempted terrorist attack".

In response to the U.S. charges, the PLO Executive Committee said that the U.S. was not serious in its dialogue although the Palestinian leadership has taken a clear and responsible position on the coastal operation. "The PLO has announced that neither it, nor any of its institutions or forces, are responsible for this operation." It also stressed that, in its capacity as the highest authority for the PLO Executive Committee members, the Palestine National Council (PNC) was the one to "examine and explore the extent of their commitment to and abidance by its resolutions on the national and international levels."

34 Ibid., p. 160.
The opening sentence of the statement of PLO Executive Committee gave enough indication that the dialogue avoided "discussion on substantial issues", and it called the whole exercise as "one and a half years of maneuvering in the U.S. - Palestinian dialogue..." 35

According to the PLO the U.S. administration's decision under such pretext was a response to the demand of the AIPAC (American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee). It further stated that while the U.S. was outraged by an operation not proved to have targeted civilians and in which no single civilian was injured, it showed nothing of this outrage toward Israel's crimes against Palestinian and Tunisian civilians in Hammam al-Shatt or when Abu Jihad (PLO's Deputy Commander and Defence Minister) was assassinated in front of his children. There was no U.S. condemnation when Palestinian workers were massacred in 'Uyun Qarah (Rishon Lezion) or when other massacres were committed in Gaza and the West Bank. 36

35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., p. 161.
The Executive Committee further said that the U.S. has been hostile to the Palestinian people and the PLO; it denies them their legitimate inalienable rights and right to self-determination; it has failed to recognise the PLO, and obstructed the implementation of binding international resolutions, including the convening of the international peace conference on the Middle East. All these things the PLO felt and experienced during the one and a half years dialogue with the U.S. 37

Inspite of suspending the dialogue President Bush said it might be resumed after Arafat condemns the "terrorist act". President Bush noted the fact that the PLO dissociated itself from this attack and issued a statement condemning attacks but that was "not sufficient". What Bush meant was disciplining Abu Abbas, the perpetrator.

He, however, said that the U.S. - PLO dialogue did advance the Arab-Israeli peace process. 38

Although Abu Abbas, the leader of the Palestinian Liberation front (PFL) was later dropped from the PLO Executive Committee the U.S., despite Bush's promise, did not resume the dialogue with the

37 Ibid., p. 162.
38 See no. 32.
PLO. The dialogue was not entirely a futile exercise. the PLO could convince the U.S. about the international peace conference on the Middle East. The U.S. was also able to understand the feelings of the Palestinians whose main demand was an independent, sovereign Palestinian State in which they would exercise their inalienable national rights. Holding official dialogue with the PLO was like according de facto recognition to the organisation by the U.S. In other words, the PLO no longer remained an "untouchable" for the U.S. The PLO - U.S. rendezvous was a turning point in PLO's international diplomacy.

The suspension of the U.S. - PLO dialogue made Israel avoid the peace process. Israel remained more recalcitrant than before. The Shamir government was planning more Jewish settlements in the occupied territories to absorb the influx of 200,000 Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union who continued to arrive despite the Gulf War, and Iraqi missiles hitting Israel.

**Impact of Gulf War**

The peace process suffered a setback during the Gulf War. the Israeli Peace Movement, which wanted a settlement of the Palestine problem, was also disrupted. Unlike the 1982 war in Lebanon
or the army's campaign against the intifada, which were widely criticised, the war against Iraq galvanised public opinion behind the Israeli government. Most of the leaders of the largest and most influential group, Peace Now, which spearheaded the Israeli Peace Movement, supported the government and said that the Gulf War was fought for a just cause. One of the activists, Yael Dayan, initiated a debate during the first week of the Gulf War when she proclaimed that "Peace Now means War Now". One of the slogans raised by intellectual peace activists was "Peace - Not Appeasement."  

Another opposition to the peace process was Israel's dependence on water from the occupied territories: 30 per cent of Israel's water comes from West Bank and it might increase to about 50 per cent. The country has become so much dependent on occupied territory water that Israeli Minister of Agriculture, former Chief-of-Staff Rafael Eitan, published a full page advertisement in the Israeli newspapers stating that under no circumstances could Israel give up the West Bank because to do so would undermine the nation's agricultural economy.

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid., p. 23.
There were obvious reasons for the Palestinians, wherever they were, to rejoice during the Gulf War. Saddam Hussein made a very vital point in a negative way: he was ready to withdraw from Kuwait provided Israel and Syria withdraw from the occupied territories of Palestine and Lebanon. This clause and his scud missile attacks on Israel made him popular among the Palestinians, other Arab masses and also third world people. Their feeling was: here is a leader who has stood up against the American imperialism. The PLO wanted Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait but not the U.S. intervention in the area. It argued that it was an Arab problem to be settled by the Arabs.

During and after the Gulf War it was thought that the PLO was a gone case as the Palestinians sided with President Saddam Hussein, and that there was no hope for the PLO which incurred the wrath of the U.S. and the Gulf States. In a way it was PLO's retaliation against the U.S. for suspension of dialogue with it. Although many eye brows were

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42 My interview with Palestinian students in India during the Gulf War.
43 My interview with Khaled El-Sheikh, PLO ambassador to India, during the Gulf War.
raised when PLO did not distance itself from Saddam Hussein, it was always the PLO strategy to side with those who confronted the U.S. and Israel. There was a limit to PLO's patience. It was always easy to find a fault with the PLO for any omission and commission. Was not the PLO capable of a diplomatic retaliation?

According to Walid Khalidi, PLO moved from "exclusive reliance on 'armed struggle' to armed struggle as an 'aid to diplomacy', and finally to diplomacy alone with no mention of the armed struggle, as at the Algiers 1988 PNC", and the "shift was, unmistakably, 180 degrees". What was the response from the U.S. and Israel? Nothing but humiliation and suffering. As a side issue the Gulf War provided the Palestinians to say "no" to the U.S. and Israeli supremacy, and to the system in which there was no place for the PLO.

Despite the prediction of doom for the PLO, it emerged as the only "Arab Victor" of the Gulf War. The questions before the U.S. and the international community were: If Kuwait was liberated, why not Palestine? Why should a different yardstick be applied in the case of Israeli occupied Palestinian territory? Why should Israel be given

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magnanimous concession for aggression and occupation?

**Palestine in New World Order**

Once again the Palestine question came to the forefront when on 16 March 1991 the U.S. President George Bush committed his country to pursuing a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict grounded in the U.N. Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, and in the principle of land for peace and providing for legitimate Palestinian political rights. The decline of the Soviet Union had already begun. The U.S. assumed the role of lone super power in the international arena. It was the U.S. which initiated the peace process and soon focused on efforts to convene a joint American-Soviet international peace conference on the Middle East. It was primarily an outcome of the Gulf War and President Bush's search for a "New World Order".

That the U.S. was serious about the conference became evident on 16 July 1991 in the Political Declaration of the Group of Seven - the U.S., Canada, France, Italy, Britain, Japan and Germany. The Declaration *inter alia* stated:
We attach over riding importance to the launching of a peace process designed to bring comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israel and her Arab neighbours, including the Palestinian. 46

This was reaffirmed in the U.S. - Soviet Joint Statement on the Middle East, Moscow, 31 July 1991. The two decided to be the co-sponsors for convening the October peace conference for a just and enduring peace and a comprehensive settlement in Middle East and invitations would be issued 10 days prior to the date of conference. 47 The Islamic Conference Organisation Foreign Ministers meeting held from 4 through 8 August whole-heartedly supported the intifada and resisted the move to rescind the U.N. General Assembly resolution that equated Zionism with racism. 48 It called for solving the Palestinian question.

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PLO's Pre-Madrid Remote Control Diplomacy

The necessary momentum was built up for the international peace conference on the Middle East. There was an all out effort by Israel to see that the PLO and Palestinian representatives from Jerusalem were excluded from the peace talks. The PLO made diplomatic moves very cautiously but forthrightly. Instead of PLO directly talking to the U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, its representatives from the occupied territories, including Jerusalem, submitted their demands in the pre-peace conference talks in Jerusalem. They made their and PLO's conditions clear for participating at the international peace conference. During their 2 August 1991 meeting with James Baker, these Palestinians, namely Faisal Husseini, Hanan Ashrawi, and Zakariya al-Agha, presented the following five-point major Palestinian demands for U.S. guarantees relating to the proposed peace conference. The very fact that the PLO in Tunis simultaneously issued these demands proved that the PLO was talking to Baker through its representatives in Jerusalem:

1. Assurance that the aim of the conference is to implement Resolutions 242 and 338 aimed at ending the occupation and Israel's withdrawing from all the Arab lands occupied in 1967, including Arab Jerusalem.
2. Recognition of the Palestinians' political national rights.

3. Palestinian participation on the basis of a PLO decision without outside intervention.

4. Discussion of the status of East Jerusalem at each stage of the negotiations with the residents of East Jerusalem taking part in the negotiations at each stage.

5. Immediate cessation to settlement on all occupied land, especially in Jerusalem.  

The Palestinians knew that they would steal the limelight once the international peace conference starts. Arafat's remote control system with the Palestinian delegation from the occupied territory was so perfect that he was all set to turn the table against the Israelis at the conference. Yet the PLO wanted iron clad guarantee that the decisions taken at the conference would be implemented. The PLO wanted certain clarifications from Secretary of State James Baker. Some of the points raised by the PLO through a member of the Palestinian delegation Zakariya al-Agha were clarified by the U.S. American officials sought to work out a series

of bilateral "Memoranda of Understanding" (MOU) concerning the ensuing conference with Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians. Agha gave an account of the "Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) reached with the U.S." The U.S. agreed that the "terms of reference" of the peace conference would be Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 which mean: "a land-for-peace exchange, the withdrawal of the Israelis and an end to the occupation."

The U.S. agreed that autonomy the Palestinians were to be granted in the transitional period should give them authority not only over the affairs of their people but also over their land and water resources. The U.S. would state that although this would not apply to the city of Jerusalem, "The Palestinian residents of Jerusalem should be allowed to vote in Palestinian self-government." The MOU would state that the U.S. supports the Palestinians' right to self-determination "but only in the context of a confederation with Jordan and not an independent Palestinian state", although they would not oppose such a state if agreement is reached on it during the negotiations.


Ibid.

Ibid.
an American hint that the conference might lead to an independent state. Baker used the word "confederation" (not "federation") which the Palestinians interpreted as "confederation of two independent states."

According to Agha, James Baker said the U.S. would try its best to persuade Israel to halt all settlement activity before or when the conference begins. The settlements were one of the powerful arguments Baker used in trying to persuade the Palestinians to attend the conference. Baker told them that if they did not join, the settlement-building would continue and the time would come when there would be no more land left to negotiate about. According to Agha 60 per cent of the West Bank and 35 per cent of the Gaza Strip had already been seized by the Israelis.

The Palestinian leaders made it clear to Baker that "they were acting on the instructions of the PLO and had told him that he was likely to find the organisation more flexible and more willing to give binding commitments if he established a direct dialogue with it." 53

53 Ibid.
U.S. Letter of Assurances

Although the U.S. did not issue any Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), it however, sent letters of Assurances (LOAs) to the states involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The U.S. Letter of Assurances (LOAs) included most of the major points James Baker had discussed and agreed to in his discussions with the Palestinian leaders. The letter stated that the U.S. did not seek to determine who speaks for Palestinians in this process.

We are seeking to launch a political negotiating process that directly involves Palestinians and offers a pathway for achieving the legitimate political rights of the Palestinian people and for participation in the determination of their future.

It suggested for a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and Palestinian would be free to announce the component of their joint delegation. The U.S. understood the Palestinian claim and sentiments for Jerusalem. The LOA stated:

The U.S. understands how much importance Palestinians attach to the question of East Jerusalem... The U.S. is opposed to the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem and extension of Israeli law on it and the extension of Jerusalem's municipal boundaries.

55 Ibid., p. 118.
56 Ibid.
The U.S. letter further made it clear that the Palestinians of East Jerusalem should be able to participate by voting in elections of an interim governing authority. It further allowed the Palestinians from East Jerusalem and Palestinians outside the occupied territories to participate in the negotiations on the final status. The U.S. supported the right of Palestinians to bring any issue including East Jerusalem to the table. 57

With all these assurances the PLO decided to participate in the peace conference through its representatives in the occupied territories. Even Israel knew that it was the PLO which decided the Palestinian delegation. But they ignored the PLO's behind the scene—often open—activities. 58

Four Jerusalemites including Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi were put in the steering committee but they received invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference. Hanan Ashrawi became the spokesperson for the Palestinian delegation, much to the chagrin of Israel. The PLO reached an understanding with Jordan and two diaspora Palestinians from Jerusalem,

57 Ib id.
Walid Khalidi, who held both Jordanian and U.S. passports, and Anwar Khatib, former governor of East Jerusalem. 59 The PLO's strategy succeeded in laying a diplomatic siege around the Israeli delegation which found Jerusalemites at all corners although they were only six in number - four in the steering committee and two in the Jordanian delegation.

The Madrid International Peace Conference

History was made not because Israel sat down with the Arab "confrontation" states - Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt - but because the Israelis faced the "invisible" Palestinians for the first time on 30 October 1991 at Madrid. In December 1973 in Geneva the Israelis had met Egypt, Syria and Lebanon at the same conference table just for two days. The conference - in the aftermath of the October 1973 war - dispersed, never to meet again. 60 The Palestinians were conspicuous by their absence there. The unique characteristic of the Madrid Peace Conference was because of the Palestinian participation. It was for the first time in this century that the Palestinians were being consulted

59 Ibid.
at an international peace conference to decide their destiny. 61

It cannot be called historic because the peace process did not move as fast as it was expected to be, although the U.S. had set the time limit of one year. However, the only contributions of the Madrid Peace Conference - especially after the Gulf War - were the creation a climate of peace through negotiations and the diplomatic get-together in which the hostile Israelis and Palestinians came to know one another. It provided an historic opportunity for the Palestinians to emerge as the superstars of the Conference, and the world was spellbound by the performance of unknown Palestinians who were living under the Israeli siege of the occupied territories.

The U.S. Framework of Peace

As decided earlier the U.S. President George Bush laid the framework of peace in his opening address in Madrid: "Negotiations are to be conducted on the basis of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338". He further said:

For Israel and the Palestinians, a framework already exists for diplomacy. Negotiations will be conducted in phases, beginning with talks on interim self-government arrangements. We aim to reach agreement within one year. And once agreed, interim self-government arrangements will last for five years, beginning the third year, negotiations will commence on permanent status. 62

Bush further assured the Palestinians that something must be developed that would be acceptable to Israel, the Palestinians, and Jordan, that gives the Palestinian people meaningful control over their own lives and fate and provides for the acceptance and security of Israel. He also made another point that the interim arrangements are not final:

But no one should avoid compromise on interim arrangements for a simple reason: nothing agreed to now will prejudice permanent status negotiations. To the contrary, these subsequent negotiations will be determined on their own merits. 63

Bush emphasised on peace with fairness: in the absence of fairness, there would be no legitimacy and no stability: this applies to the Palestinian people, many of whom have known turmoil and frustrations; and Israel now has an opportunity to


63 Ibid.
demonstrate that it is willing to enter into a new relationship with its Palestinian neighbours.

Right from the very beginning Israel tried to sabotage the Peace Conference, after failing to avert the convening of Madrid peace process. It knew very well that in the peace negotiations it was Israel which would face diplomatic isolation. Nevertheless, the Israeli leaders, especially Yitzhak Shamir, thought that the conference should start and they would drag it for a decade. In the meanwhile the intifada, the main threat to Israel's security, would enter the phase of decline.

The Israeli Cliche

Even in the opening addresses on-going intifada was mentioned by delegations. Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's opening address centred around the normal rhetorics, historical distortions and lies the Zionists and Israel have been pronouncing before and after the state came into being. Some of the total lies were when Shamir said: "We are the only people who have lived in the Land of Israel without interruption for nearly 4,000 years. We

64 Mehmood Hussain, no. 61.
are the only people, except for a short Crusader kingdom, who have had an independent sovereignty in this land. We are the only people for whom Jerusalem has been a capital." He further said that the U.N. resolution that partitioned the country was violated and effectively annulled.

The international media had been tired of listening to such swan songs of the crusty Zionists who deprived the original inhabitants of the land to have their own state. The Palestinian delegation, therefore, received much more attention than the Israelis and stole the limelight. The Israeli Government expressed surprise and displeasure over the fact that the Jordanians and the Palestinians, officially part of the same delegation, were each allotted 45 minutes for their addresses instead of having to share the time between them.

**Exceptional Palestinian Debut**

In his opening address on 31 October the head of the Palestinians delegation 72-year-old Haydar Abdal-Shafi drew the attention of the world to the sufferings of the Palestinian people who have

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65 See no. 62, p. 129.
been victimised by the myth of a land without a people and described with impunity as the "invisible Palestinians." He further added:

Before such willful blindness, we refused to disappear or to accept a distorted identity. Our intifada is a testimony to our perseverance and resilience waged in a just struggle to regain our rights. It is time for us to narrate our own story, to stand witness as advocates of truth which has long lain buried in the consciousness and conscience of the world.66

Acknowledgement of PLO Leadership

Haydar complained in his speech that even in the invitation to the peace conference, the Palestinian narrative was distorted, and their truth partially acknowledged. He resented the fact that they have been denied the right to publicly acknowledge their loyalty to their leadership and system of government. He made a very pertinent point when he said that allegiance and loyalty cannot be censored or severed. By this he made it clear that their leader is the PLO:

Our acknowledged leadership is more than (the) justly democratically chosen leadership of all the Palestinian people. It is the symbol of our national unity and identity, the guardian of our past, the protector of our present, and the hope of our future. Our people have

chosen to entrust it with their history and the preservation of our legacy. This leadership has been clearly and unequivocally recognised by the community of nations, with only a few exceptions who had chosen for so many years shadow over substance. 67

Jerusalem in Diplomatic Quarantine

This was a befitting reply to Israel which had prevented the direct participation of the PLO, Palestinians from Jerusalem and the diaspora Palestinians. He ostensibly made it clear that all the Palestinians are united - a nation wherever the are, or are forced to be. Speaking about Jerusalem he said that the city is not only the soul of Palestine, but the cradle of three world religions, and was tangible even in its claimed absence from the peace conference. It was as if the quarantined Jerusalem spoke through Haydar:

Jerusalem, the city of peace, has been barred from a peace conference and deprived of its calling. Palestinian Jerusalem, the capital of our homeland and future state, defines Palestinian existence, past, present, and future, but itself has been denied a voice and an identity. Jerusalem defies exclusive possessiveness or bondage.68

A calm and resolute Haydar seized the imagination of the international media persons and the world public opinion when he said that the Palestinian

67 Ibid., p. 134.
68 Ibid.
delegation came from a tortured land and a proud, though captive people, having been asked to negotiate with their occupiers, but leaving behind the children of the intifada, and people under occupation and under curfew who enjoined the delegation not to surrender or forget.

As we speak, thousands of our brothers and sisters are languishing in Israeli prisons and detention camps, most detained without evidence, charge or trial, many cruelly mistreated and tortured in interrogation, guilty only of seeking freedom or daring to defy the occupation. We speak in their name and we say: set them free. As we speak, the tens of thousands who have been wounded or permanently disabled are in pain. Let peace seal their wounds.... the silence of demolished homes echoes through the halls and in our minds.69

Haydar then went on asking very touching questions: And what do we tell the loved ones of those killed by army bullets? How do we answer the questions and the fear in our children's eyes? For one out of three Palestinian children under occupation has been killed, injured, or detained in the past four years. How can we explain to our children that they are denied education for schools are so often closed by the army? Or why their life is in danger for raising a flag in a land where

69 Ibid.
even children are killed or jailed? And most of all, who can explain to those whose lands are confiscated and clear water stolen, a message of peace.

Then he questioned the "territory for peace" formula which was being violated: "Territory for peace is a travesty when territory for illegal settlement is official Israeli policy and practice. The settlements must stop now." 70

Appeal to Sponsors for Palestinian State

Appealing to the cosponsors and participants of the conference Haydar said very boldly that Palestinians would persist in their quest for peace to place before them the substance and determination of the Palestinian people, "often victimised but never defeated." "We shall pursue our people's right to self-determination to the exhilaration of freedom and to the warmth of the sun as a nation among equals." 71

For the Palestinians that was "the moment of truth." The sponsors and participants should have the courage to recognise it and the will to implement it. He added that the people of Palestine look at them with a straight forward, direct gaze,

70 Ibid.
71 Ibid., p. 135.
Seeking to touch their heart, for they have dared to stir up hopes that cannot be abandoned. Haydar further added: "You cannot afford to let us down, for we have lived up to the values you espouse, and we have remained true to our cause." 72

Haydar mentioned the 19th PNC resolution of November 1988 during which the PLO launched its peace offensive and declared independence of Palestine based on the U.N. Resolution 181. He said that although their homeland never ceased to exist in the Palestinian minds and hearts, it has to exist as a state on all territories occupied by Israel in the 1967 war with Arab Jerusalem as its capital in the context of that city's special status and its nonexclusive character. "This state", he said fervently, "...should take place today rather than tomorrow." 73 However, they were ready to accept the transitional stage provided the interim arrangements are not transformed into permanent status. He argued that the time frame must be condensed to respond to the dispossessed Palestinians' urgent need for sanctuary and to the occupied Palestinians' right to gain relief from oppression.

72 Ibid.
73 Ibid., p. 136.
Olive Branch of Peace

As regards the intifada Haydar said, "The intifada is our drive towards nation-building and social transformation." He did mention about the doubts and skepticism of some of the Palestinian people about the peace process, but such differences of opinion do exist in the democratic, pluralistic structure of Palestinians; and the opposition's right to differ within the parameters of mutual respect and national unity has to be guarded by the Palestinians. Referring to Jerusalem the city of peace, Haydar Abd al-Shafi, before finishing his speech, said:

The cobbled streets of the old city must not echo with discordant beat of Israeli military boots. We must restore to them the chant of the muezzin, the chimes of the church, the call of the ram, and the prayers of all the faithful calling for peace in the city of peace.

Expressing the wishes of the Plestinians to establish peace with justice, Haydar further stated:

From Madrid let's light the candle of peace and let the olive branch blossom. Let's celebrate the rituals of justice and rejoice in the Hymns of truth, for the awe of the moment is a promise to the future, which we all must redeem.

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74 Ibid.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., pp. 136-37.
77 Ibid.
Palestinians will be free and will stand tall among the community of nations in the fullness of the pride and dignity.... Today, our people under occupation are holding high olive branch of peace. In the words of Chairman Arafat in 1974 before the U.N. General Assembly: Let not the olive branch of peace fall from my hands....78

Haydar Abd al-Shafi's speech, reminiscent of Arafat's historic speech at the U.N., was well received all over the world. Even Secretary of State James Baker seemed to have been satisfied with it and said at his press conference in Madrid "...I think a lot of what the Palestinian representatives had to say at the conference was well received in many places around the world." 79 As the Madrid Conference started the Palestinians offered olive branches and flowers to the Israeli soldiers in the West Bank and Gaza.

Arafat's Diplomacy in Absentia

The PLO's presence was felt throughout the conference as it was launching the diplomatic offensive behind the scene. Arafat had despatched his top aides to Madrid who were operating as fedayeen in diplomacy. These aides maintained a discreet distance for the first few days, communicating

78 Ibid.
with the Palestinian delegation by phone, fax, and at meetings in restaurants and the homes of Palestinians living in Madrid. Yasser Arafat was in touch with the delegation and sent a plane to bring its members, including Hanan Ashrawi and Faisal Husseini, to meet him at Rabat between the plenary and bilateral talks. One of the delegates, Saeb Erekat told the CNN in his interview that the whole Palestinian delegation was appointed by the PLO. Haydar's speech was written by Hanan Ashrawi, and amended by himself, Mamduh Aker, Nabil Shaath and Yasser Arafat.

Hanan Ashrawi, the spokesperson of the delegation, became an international superstar overnight. She was so sophisticated, balanced, articulate and precise that she became a darling of the international media and the Americans including James Baker. A Madrid joke that was in circulation—and repeated by Americans—was that Shamir's biggest mistake was in keeping Arafat out of the conference, since Arafat would not have been nearly as effective as Ashrawi. Baker had publicly thrown his cloak of protection over the Palestinians.

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81 Ibid.
after the Madrid conference by conspicuously inviting Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi to Washington at a time when Israel was making sounds about arresting them for meeting Yasser Arafat; and he made sure that they were also present in Madrid as "advisers" despite Israeli objections. By allotting 45 minutes to the Palestinians they got to the status of an "independent" delegation. Their partners the Jordanians let the Palestinians run the entire show. The Western world was listening to Israel since 1948, but was amazed to listen to the struggling Palestinians.

Bilateral Talks

The glitzy and much-vaunted peace conference soon turned sour as the bilateral talks between Israel and Palestinians reached deadlock one after the other. It could not move beyond the procedural wrangles. The Israeli strategy during the peace negotiations was to continue it as long as possible during which Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir wanted to settle 500,000 to 800,000 immigrant Jews in the occupied territory. Ostensibly these settlements would have blocked the peace process; and it would

have been difficult for the Palestinians to get anything. It was revealed by Shamir, after his defeat, in a candid interview with Israeli daily Ma'ariv:

We would have conducted negotiations on autonomy for ten years and in the meanwhile we would have reached one half million people (in the occupied territories). 83

During Shamir's time five rounds of bilateral talks between Israelis and Palestinians - 2-3 November 1991 (Madrid), 10-12, 15-18 December 1991 (Washington), 13-16 January 1992 (Washington), 24 February-4 March 1992 (Washington), and 27-30 April 1992 (Washington) - ended in deadlock. Only in the fourth round Israel and the Palestinian delegations exchanged proposals on self-rule but failed to make any substantive progress. 84 Although the prospects for peace looked "brighter" after Yitzhak Rabin became the Prime Minister on 23 June 1992, there was hardly any progress in the peace process. the government changes but Zionism continues. At the sixth, seventh and eighth rounds of bilateral negotiations in Washington the Palestinian delegation found the Rabin proposals a little more than a

warmed-up rehash of what his predecessor, Yitzhak Shamir, had cynically offered them in February and April 1992.

Stalemate in Negotiations

In order to stall the peace talks Israel resorted to the deportation of 415 Palestinians on 17 December 1992. This became a major crisis that affected the peace process for four months. The ninth and final round of peace talks was opened by the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher in Washington on 27 April 1993 urging the parties to focus on substance not procedures. The hoped for outcome of the ninth round—which continued till 13 May 1993—was a joint declaration of principles on the Palestinian self-rule in occupied territories. The Israeli and Palestinian delegations submitted their drafts of "Agreed Statement of Principles" on 6 and 10 May respectively. In fulfillment of its pledge to act as a "full partner" in the peace negotiations, the U.S. drafted a document which was an attempt to bridge the Israeli and Palestinian versions of the "Statement of Principles" on the Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories. The PLO rejected both the Israeli and

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the U.S. drafts. The Palestinian delegation boycotted the 12 May trilateral meeting at which the U.S. draft was to be distributed and discussed expressing displeasure that the text had already been amended as a result of prior consultations with the Israelis. The basic differences between the three drafts were too crucial for the Palestinians. The Palestinian draft stated very candidly that "all powers presently exercised by the Israeli military government and its civil administration should be transferred orderly and peacefully to the PISGA (Palestinian Interim Self-Governing Authority) upon its election and inauguration. For this to be freely exercised, the Israeli armed forces shall start their withdrawal which should be completed according to the agreed-upon schedule and time limit, under agreed international supervision." But this was missing from both the Israeli and American drafts which stated only about transfer of functions from the Israeli civil administration to the Palestinians. No agreement was reached before the ninth round ended in deadlock on 13 May 1993.


Apart from these differences there was the vital question that the Israelis and the Americans had deliberately ignored: the recognition of the PLO. Who would take over the charge of the occupied territories to run the administration before the elections take place for the Self-Government? Who would organise the elections from among the Palestinians? The cyclonic intifada would never allow Israel to hold the hustings in the occupied territories which might not be free and fair. Stalemate continued in the official negotiations.

Clinton's Diplomatic Strategy

When Bill Clinton took over as President of the U.S. in 1993 his administration strategy to the Middle East, as analysed by Martin Indyk, special assistant to the President, could be encapsulated as follows:

(a) dual containment of Iraq and Iran in the east; (b) promotion of Arab-Israeli peace in the West; (c) backed by energetic efforts to stem the spread of weapons of mass destruction and promote a vision of more democratic and prosperous region for all the peoples of the Middle East...

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88 Document: "Special Assistant to the President, Martin Indyk, remarks on the Clinton Administration's Approach to the Middle East, Washington, D.C., 18 May 1993". Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. XXII, No.4, Summer 1993, pp. 159-61. Martin Indyk, former Executive Director of the AIPAC - affiliated Washington Institute for Near East Policy and currently charged with Middle East Affairs at the National Security Council.
According to him in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the defeat of Iraq there is a vacuum. "But nature - especially Middle East nature - abhors a vacuum. With one set of troublemakers down, another set has emerged to take its place." 89 Decades of neglect and dashed hopes for political participation and social justice have nurtured some violent movements cloaked in religious garb that have begun to challenge governments across the Arab world with the potential of destabilizing the region. After the collapse of communism, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism is perceived as a major threat to the U.S. interests. The Islamic radicalism - the Green Evil - needs to be countered with effective strategy.

The U.S. is concerned about the rise of radical Islamic forces in Iran and Sudan which provide assistance to the religious extremists. The task of the U.S. is to help the people and governments in the Middle East confront this emerging threat, in part by pursuing peace with vigour, in part by containing extremism throughout the region, and in part by holding out an alternative vision of democratic political development and free market

89 Ibid.
development not just for the people of the former Soviet Union, but for the people of Middle East as well.\textsuperscript{90} He further stated:

...containing threats posed by Iraq and Iran in the east will impact on our ability to promote peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours.\textsuperscript{91}

According to Indyk Islamic extremists pose a common threat to all the parties engaged in the peace talks whether Israel, or Palestinians or even Syria. Based on the American assessment that the negotiations were ripe for breakthroughs on several fronts, they offered to step up America's role in the negotiations by offering to become a "full partner" to all the parties; if the negotiating parties are ready to solve their problems through compromises which take account of the minimum requirements of the other side, the Americans are ready to act as the facilitator and intermediary.\textsuperscript{92}

President Bill Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher made it clear that their approach to the negotiations would involve working with Israel, not against it. The U.S. is "committed to strategic partnership with Israel in the pursuit

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
of peace and security."\textsuperscript{93} The U.S. wanted Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories. That, of course, involves risks for Israel but Clinton maintained that risk could be minimised by fulfilling the American commitment to "Israel's qualitative edge."\textsuperscript{94} This qualitative edge of Israel was, of course, assured by the U.S. Letter of Assurance (LOA) to Israel before the Madrid Conference.

**Escalation of Intifada**

When the ninth round of Washington peace talks reached a deadlock the resistance was further escalated. The Israeli forces indulged in violent repression of the relatively non-violent and absolutely innocent Palestinian masses. While the Israeli delay tactics succeeded in prolonging the negotiations for a pretty long time, the intifada did not wait for the outcome of the peace talks. They knew the Israeli policies better than many others as they had lived under them, experienced them and fought them like fighting the crocodile in the water. The Israeli and American intentions became clear from their drafts that the Palestinian interim self-government would have to function

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
under the Israeli armed forces. The PLO rejected it and the answer to this was the Palestinian 
intifada that went on unabated, whether agreement or no agreement.

Meanwhile the working groups, whose members were from both sides, had met several times to explore the possibilities on land and water, self-rule and human rights. The PLO then thought of other channels of diplomatic communications for a direct PLO talk with the Israelis. The PLO's diplomatic cards were the intifada and the 10-Palestinian rejectionist factions including Hamas. Israel found itself between the devil and the deep sea. Maintaining the status quo in the occupied territories was completely ruled out. The burgeoning militancy within the ranks of the intifada posed a serious security threat. The Israeli peace groups and intellectuals had already pressurised the government to hold direct talks with the PLO. Unless a compromise is reached between Israel and the PLO about the future state of Palestine, the intifada and also armed resistance combined with guerilla warfare would continue. According to Israelis if they did not exchange territory for peace there
might not be a state of Israel in future; Arabs were defeated in the short run but in the long run Arabs might defeat Israel. The intifada proved that Palestinians could not be defeated; and it could wipe off Israel in course of time, for that has been the history of inimitable Palestinians. Shimon Peres has the long term perspective of peace for the existence of Israel. Rabin was forced by the intifada to recognise the limits of the possible and to see, as a perceptive columnist wrote in Ha'aretz in August 1992, that after 25 years of occupation: "...it is becoming clear to anyone with eyes in his head that it is absurd to hold on to the territories and their Palestinian residents. The idea has no basis in reality." 95

Underground Diplomacy at Oslo

It seems the Israeli leadership thought over all these aspects of the problem before venturing into secret parleys with the PLO. Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres wanted to broker an agreement with the PLO. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, too, wanted to clandestinely negotiate peace. Both the parties thought that the peace talks between

them get over publicised resulting in no progress. If the secret negotiations fail there would not be any disappointment and frustrations. It was through the Western Europe, especially France and Sweden, that Arafat had started his diplomacy with the U.S. He knew the Norwegian Foreign Minister J.J. Holst personally. He used to visit Lebanon where the Norwegian forces participated in the UNIFIL assignments as part of the U.N. forces. In diplomacy also Arafat used guerilla tactics to negotiate with the Israelis. Arafat's secret olive branch through Holst was welcomed by Peres and Rabin. When the ninth round of peace talks resulted once again in the stalemate secret negotiations in Oslo were the only way out. The Norwegian hosts were cordial and nice maintaining utmost secrecy. At least 14 rounds of secret talks were organised by Norway between two Israeli and two Palestinian negotiators. 96 Uri Savir, a director general with Israel's Foreign Minister, and Ahmed Quirie (Abu Ala), a senior PLO official, were the architects of the peace deal known as the Israel-

PLO Peace Accord.\textsuperscript{97} Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and a PLO executive committee member Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) played a vital role during the negotiations. The final Israel-PLO agreed draft was ready by 19 August 1993. The agreed draft is known as "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements" popularly known as Israel-PLO Accord or PLO-Israel Accord. The draft was approved by the Israeli cabinet on 30 August 1993.\textsuperscript{98} PLO and Israel signed and exchanged documents through Norwegian Foreign Minister J.J. Holst recognising each other before the Accord was signed in Washington on 13 September 1993. It would be naive to believe that the U.S. did not know about these secret negotiations. It was the U.S. which always insisted on bilateral negotiations. After all the basis or the infrastructure of the Accord was the U.S. draft of "Israel-Palestinian Joint statement" presented to the ninth round of peace talks. The Accord was a further improvement upon the U.S. draft. However, the credit goes to late J.J. Hoslt and his wife for painfully pursuing the secret, arduous and one of the most difficult negotiations in history. It was Holst who succeeded in the most difficult task of the negotiations-Israel's recognition of the PLO.

\textsuperscript{97} Uri Savir and Ahmed Quirie, the two architects of the Israeli-PLO Peace Accord, were awarded the grand cross of the Norwegian Order of Merit, the highest Norwegian order to foreigners. Ibid.
The Israel-PLO Peace Accord

The signing of the historic Israel-PLO Peace Accord or the PLO-Israel Accord, known as the "Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements", on the broad lush green South Lawn of the White House, with chrysanthemums in bloom and robins calling, heralded a new era in the 45 years violent Israeli-Palestinian relations. It was a framework for interim Palestinian self-government and a document to bind Israel and the PLO to further agreements and constructive deliberations. It was, indeed, a profound statement of hope given not only to the Israelis and Palestinians but to the whole world. The coming together of Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat was undoubtedly a historic occasion. Rabin is an usual visitor to the White House. But Yasser Arafat shaking hands with the U.S. President Bill Clinton in Washington, D.C. with click of hundreds of cameras, a scene beamed to millions of people in a world nurtured for 45 years on a staple diet of hate and violence in the holy land of Palestine, was indeed historic. The PLO always wanted to reach the top. For the struggling Palestinian masses it was indeed a great victory to see their leader Yasser Arafat being
received by the U.S. President Bill Clinton. They experienced a unique feeling: their ultimate enemy the U.S., which was responsible for creating the state of Israel, was giving due respect to the Palestinian nation. For the impoverished Palestinians it was a moment of glory of their revolution. The fedayeen's guerilla warfare and the intifada finally resulted in a diplomatic victory. The recognition of their nationhood by the U.S. was as much important as the limited autonomy and the self-government the Palestinians were able to get. Indeed the Palestinians have travelled a long way from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles—who said about them in the 1950s "the elders will die and the youngers will forget (Palestine)" to President Bill Clinton who is guaranteeing them a self-rule which they think would lead to an independent sovereign Palestinian State. Even at the last moment Yitzhak Rabin did not want to name the PLO in the Accord. Then he had to swallow his own objections, and the PLO was specifically named in the Accord. He also had objections to Arafat's guerilla uniform. But Rabin's objections were over ruled. At the entire signing ceremony Arafat smiled all the time—a sign of victory.
This was his arrival on the world stage he had always dreamed of. Rabin was uncomfortable and stiff. His body language throughout the ceremony — the tics, the cocking of his head, the eyes cast toward the sky, the ground, anywhere but Arafat — gave away just how uneasy he was. As if Rabin was signing the Accord under duress, burying the dreams of a 'greater Israel' in the lush green lawns of the White House. The Accord was signed by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and a PLO Executive Committee member Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). Upon the shun was Faruq Qaddumi the PLO's Foreign Minister, who was supposed to sign the Accord. He disagreed with the Accord and was conspicuous by his absence at the ceremony.

"Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements"

The Israel-PLO Peace Accord is the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. It states that both sides agree to put an end to decades of confrontation and conflict, recognise their mutual legitimate and political rights, and strive to live in peaceful coexistence and mutual dignity and security and achieve a just, lasting

and comprehensive peace settlement and historic reconciliation through agreed political process. The 19-page Declaration is based on 17 articles of principles and four annexes.

Article 1 stipulates that the aim of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations within the current Middle East peace process, among other things, to establish a Palestinian Interim Self-Government Authority (PISGA), the elected council, for the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for a transitional period not exceeding five years, leading to a permanent settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 and 338.

It is understood that the interim arrangements are an integral part of the whole peace process and that the negotiations on the permanent status will lead to the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

Protocol on withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza Strip and Jericho (annex II) stipulates that the two sides would conclude and sign within two months from the date of entry into force of this Declaration of Principles, an agreement on the withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area. It also stipulates

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101 Ibid., pp. 1-2.
that Israel would implement an associated and scheduled withdrawal of its military forces from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area, beginning immediately with the signing of the agreement and to be completed within a period not exceeding four months after the signing of this agreement. This agreement would include arrangements for a smooth and peaceful transfer of authority from the Israeli military government and its civil administration to the Palestinian representatives.\textsuperscript{102}

According to Article III direct, free and general elections would be held for the Council under agreed supervision and international observation, while the Palestinian police would ensure public order. This election would be held within nine months of signing of the Declaration. The jurisdiction of the Council would cover West Bank and Gaza Strip territory; and the two sides view the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a single territorial unit whose integrity would be preserved during the interim period.\textsuperscript{103}

The five year transitional period would begin upon the withdrawal from Gaza Strip and Jericho area. Permanent status negotiations would commence

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., pp. 11-13.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., p.2.
as soon as possible, but not later than the beginning of the third year of the interim period, between Israel and Palestinian people's representatives; and it is understood that these negotiations shall cover remaining issues, including Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, security arrangements, borders, relations and cooperation with other neighbours. (Article V).\textsuperscript{104}

This article also stipulates that the outcome of the permanent status negotiations should not be prejudiced or preempted by agreements reached for the interim period.

Immediately after the Declaration comes into force and the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and Jericho area, with the view to promoting economic development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, authority would be transferred to the Palestinians on the following spheres: education and culture, health, social welfare, direct taxation, and tourism. The Palestinian side would commence in building the Palestinian police force; pending the inauguration of the Council, the two parties may negotiate the transfer of additional powers and responsibilities. (Article VI).\textsuperscript{105}

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., p.3.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid., pp. 3-4
There is a provision for the Interim Agreement in article VII for the interim period. The two sides would negotiate it to specify the structure of the council, the number of its members and the transfer of powers and responsibilities from the Israeli military government and its Civil Administration to the Council. This Interim Agreement would also specify "the Council's executive authority, legislative authority and the independent Palestinian judicial organs. The Council would assume all the powers and responsibilities transferred previously under Article VI."106 After its inauguration the Council would promote economic growth by establishing a Palestinian Development Bank, a Palestinian Electricity Authority, a Gaza Sea Port Authority, Palestinian Export Promotion Board, Palestinian Environmental authority, a Palestinian Land Authority and Palestinian Water Administration Authority, as per the Interim Agreement which would specify their powers and responsibilities. When the Council comes into being the Civil Administration and the Israeli military government would be withdrawn.

The Council would ensure public order and internal security for the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip through a strong police force;

106 Ibid., pp. 4-5.
Israel would continue to carry the responsibility for defending against external threats as well as the responsibility for overall security of Israelis for safeguarding their internal security and public order. (Article VIII). After the Declaration comes into force a joint Israel-Palestinian Liaison Committee would be established to deal with issues requiring coordination, other issues of common interest and disputes; and Israeli-Palestinian Economic Cooperation Committee would be established in order to promote the development of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel.

The two parties (Israelis and Palestinians) would invite the governments of Jordan and Egypt to participate in establishing further liaison and cooperation arrangements. These arrangements would include the formation of a Continuing Committee that would decide by agreement on the modalities of admission of persons displaced from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1967, together with necessary measures to prevent disruption and disorder." (Article XII). This Committee would also deal with other matters of common concern.

107 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
108 Ibid., p.7.
The Implications of the Declaration of Principles

The Palestinian "Draft Declaration" at the ninth round of peace talks had its impact on this joint Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements. It became a synthesis of the American draft and the Palestinian draft. The biggest achievement of the secret Oslo negotiations between the Palestinians of the PLO and the Israeli officials was the recognition of the PLO. The recognition of the State of Israel by the PLO was already there. The PLO's announcement of renouncing terrorism and accepting two-nation theory was just a formality which Israel wanted in the documents they signed and exchanged through Norwegian Foreign Minister J.J. Holst who shuttled between Tunis and Jerusalem.

As the first historic step towards a lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian Arab conflict the Declaration of Principles or the Oslo Accord is considered a landmark. But it requires a great deal of will power and determination from both the parties to implement it. Of course, there would always be some people on both sides to oppose it.
Loopholes and Lacunae

The Declaration, however, is replete with loopholes and lacunae. While negotiating and drafting the Accord, it seems, the Israelis and the Palestinians were playing cat-and-mouse game even in diplomacy and territorial adjustments. For instance, once the Interim Agreement is signed the Israeli military forces would be withdrawn from the Gaza and Jericho area. But according to article XIII a redeployment of Israeli military forces would take place in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, after the entry into force of this declaration, and not later than the eve of elections for the Council.\textsuperscript{109} This Article stipulates that in redeploying its military forces, Israel would be guided by the principles that its military forces should be redeployed outside populated areas; and "further redeployment to specified locations" would be gradually implemented "commensurate with the assumption of responsibility for public order and internal security by the Palestinian police force"...\textsuperscript{110} In other words, it means the Israeli military forces would be withdrawn and redeployed till the eve of elections for the Council and also thereafter.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., pp. 7-8.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.
This obviously creates confusion and contradiction. As Israeli journalist Yoel Marcus pointed out: "it is impossible to both withdraw from Gaza and remain there at the same time." Thereby the Israelis had a definite edge over the PLO which made a major concession.

Israel is caught between the horns of a dilemma: to quit the occupied territories and to hold onto it as long as possible under the pretext of its "security", without any regard for the Palestinian self-rule.

Initial Hurdles

The Declaration, as per the Article XVIII, entered into force one month after signing (13 October 1993). The Interim Agreement was supposed to have been signed within two months and the Israeli forces should have started withdrawal from 13 December. There were several rounds of talks at Taba and El-Arish in Egypt, followed by diplomatic parleys in Norway, France and Cairo. But both the Israeli and the PLO negotiators failed to reach an agreement on the Interim Agreement. Some of the issues on which the two sides squabbled and sulked were: control of border check points; the

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size of Jericho area; the structure of Palestinian police; protection of Jewish settlers in the west Bank and Gaza Strip; and the release of Palestinian prisoners. While the Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the architect of the Accord from the Israeli side, was serious about the deadline for the implementation of the Accord as per the time schedule, Premier Yitzhak Rabin wanted to embarrass Arafat and humiliate the PLO by denying the "sanctity" of 13 December. He also drawled that the final date of completion of Israeli pullout - 13 April 1994 - was not "sacred", and deliberately tried to extract "last minute tactical fruits" on outstanding differences. 112 Thereby Rabin could delay the implementation by five months; and he was responsible for the violence and massacres.

**Clash of Conflicting Ideologies**

The underlying difficulty in implementing the declaration is the daunting disagreement between Israel, and the PLO: What Israel sees as limited self-rule for the Palestinians in some of the occupied territories, the PLO sees as the first step towards its goal of an independent sovereign

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112 Ibid
Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. There is an ostensible clash between the Zionist tendency of colonisation, aggression, occupation, dominance, repression and humiliation of the local population, and the Palestinian aspiration for national liberation and statehood. This is clearly visible in their pre-Accord and post-Accord talks, and violent confrontations that followed due to the belated implementation of the PLO-Israel Accord.

**Jewish Settlers' Menace**

The 120,000 Jewish settlers in the West Bank and 3,000 in the Gaza strip are a major threat to the implementation of the Accord. They do not want the Accord to be implemented. In the aftermath of signing the Accord they indulged in violence against the Palestinians with the intention of wrecking the peace process, and pressurising the Israeli government not to implement the self-rule. These Jewish settlers occupy about 60 per cent of the land of West Bank and 40 per cent of the Gaza Strip illegally confiscated by Israel. The settler hard-liners consider the Accord to be the first step towards a *de facto* dismantling of the 144 Jewish towns built in the West Bank and Gaza
Strip, since the Israeli occupation in 1967. Nearly all of them are armed to the teeth: an estimated 30,000 own rifles and handguns and several settlements boast depots stocked with mines and handgrenades.\textsuperscript{113} There is ambiguity in the Accord over the issue of Jewish settlements both deliberate and potentially mortal to any Palestinian aspirations to statehood. As Salah Abd al-Shafi, a Palestinian economist, said:

If the Israelis and Palestinians can't agree that the settlements are illegal entities on our land - and in the agreement there is no word about this - then we are saying that in the occupied territories there are de facto two separate entities and that these are somehow equivalent. \textsuperscript{114}

The protection of settlers may be used by Israel as a pretext to intervene in the autonomous/independent Palestinian state. These aggressive war monger Zionist Jews - who provided a security belt for Israel - are trying to sabotage the final status negotiations when it starts at the beginning of the third year of the interim period (May 1996). As per the Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949 and the U.N. resolutions these settlements are illegal. The PLO would try its best to get rid of the settlements through tactful diplomacy.

\textsuperscript{113} See Graham Usher, no. 111.
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
Any intransigence on the part of Israelis would lead to the revival of the intifada to evacuate the settlers. These fanatic settlers provide enough fuel for the violence of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

New Intifada

The non-implementation of the Accord within the prescribed time schedule created a turbulent situation. Immediately after the signing ceremony the Israeli army instead of decreasing further increased in the occupied territories avenging its earlier enemies, Fatah, Hamas and others. Hardly a week passed since 13 September when there was no violence and counter-violence. The killing of Hamas military leader Imad Akel on 26 November 1993 became a major issue for all the Palestinians and political groups; and the day after the killing was reminiscent of the early days of the intifada with tires burning and fierce confrontations with the Israeli forces. When the Accord failed to pass the first test on 13 December 1993, the intifada was back in the Gaza Strip and West Bank calling itself the New Intifada. Hamas and Islamic Jihad - the Palestinian hardliners totally opposed to the Accord - and also others became active once again against the Israeli forces and the hardliner settlers.

115 Daoud Kuttab, "Frustration and anger", Middle East International, 3 December 1993, pp. 5-6.
The Hebron Massacre

The Hebron massacre was the culmination of the Jewish settlers' violence against the Palestinians. While they were offering early morning prayer on Friday, 25 February 1994 during the Ramzan, the holy month of fasting, at the Ibrahimi mosque at Hebron, 53 of them were massacred by Baruch Goldstein, a member of right wing Rabi Kahane's group, in complicity with Israeli army units.\footnote{Metmood Hussain, "The Hebron Massacre: A normal Zionist Practice", Third World Impact, April 1994, p. 10.} The New intifada was further intensified in the occupied territories resulting in the death of 100 Palestinians by the Israeli army. The peace process suffered a setback strengthening the hands of the extremist Hamas and Islamic Jihad which avenged some of the deaths, surprisingly inside Israel proper. Yasser Arafat's popularity reached an all time low and Palestinian mob manhandled Faisal Husseini. The Palestinians started questioning the accord and the peace talks. some of the members of Al-Fatah (hawks) also joined the new uprising. After three weeks of dithering, the U.N. Security Council condemned the Hebron massacre in a resolution on 18 March 1994. Hamas served the ultimatum to Israel for withdrawal within 15 days.
Interim Agreement (4 May 1994)

In the turbulent situation created by the New Intifada Arafat played his diplomatic card and exerted pressure on the U.S. which forced Israel to sign the Interim agreement on 4 May 1994. The U.S. President Bill Clinton became serious about the implementation of the Accord when he had announced after the Habron massacre that he would put the Israelis and Palestinians in a room till they come out with the agreement.

The Interim Agreement, a 200-page document, signed by Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin after months of tortuous negotiations, left some of the important issues unresolved: release of non-PLO Palestinian prisoners, size of the Jericho enclave; PLO demands for Palestinian presence on Allenby Bridge crossing to Jericho from Jordan, and a Palestinian director of the Rafah crossing from Egypt to the Gaza Strip. However, it calls for a 9,000 Palestinian Police force, with 7,000 recruited from the diaspora Palestinians and 2,000 from the West Bank at Gaza Strip.

Historic Self-Rule

Immediately after the signing ceremony Brig. Gen. Ghazi al-Jabali, leader of the Palestinian group of 19 police commanders, entered Gaza on 4 May and 600 Palestinian prisoners, including four belonging to factions opposed to the Accord, arrived there to the ululation of welcoming Palestinians. This was followed by the arrival of 1,500 Palestinian police - drawn mostly from the PLA and trained in six Arab countries and Norway - in the first week of the self-rule. The Israeli forces withdrew leaving behind empty buildings devoid of even tables, chairs, pen, pencil and paper. Before the expiry of the first three weeks most of the Palestinian police took up their responsibilities in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

Yasser Arafat made his historic entry into Gaza on 1 July 1994 amid national euphoria and celebrations. The Palestinians were overwhelmed by emotions to see their leader, the President of nascent Palestine State, the symbol of their nation. As an old Palestinian remarked: "After all we also have a President". For two days Arafat talked to people ceaselessly round the clock without a wink of sleep. A 25 member Council was set up in Gaza to run the administration of the Palestine
National Authority. The problems before him are enormous: economic, political and diplomatic. The Palestinians have started the nation building from scratch and do not have the financial resources. The billions of dollars promised by IMF, World Bank and others to Palestine evaporated as Arafat refused to accept their conditions:

I completely refuse any control by any body on Palestinian autonomy, except the Palestinians themselves. We did not finish military occupation to get economic occupation... Every thing is destroyed here. There is no water, no drainage, no hospital, no homes, but morale is high, to my great surprise.

When the U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher visited Arafat in Gaza, he was believed to have discussed the problems - both economic and diplomatic - with him. According to subsequent PLO - Israel agreements between August and October 1994 the authority was transferred to the PLO on the following spheres: education and culture, health, social welfare, taxation and tourism. The Palestinian presence was allowed at the border check points. An agreement signed by Arafat and Rabin on 25 September extend the Palestinian self-rule to some more areas of the West Bank; and the

118 Sun Times (Bhubaneshwar), 6 July 1994.
re-deployment of Israeli forces is taking place signalling the Council elections. There is decline in violence since the self-rule. The peace process would ultimately lead to the Palestine State with Jerusalem as its capital.

The beginning of self-rule heralded a new era of freedom for the Palestinians. As General Nassr Youssef, commander of Palestinian police force, said nostalgically: "There are historic moments in the life of a Palestinian to return to the homeland after a long period in diaspora. We left as children and here we are returning as an old people."¹¹⁹

As the Palestinian police and indomitable Yasser Arafat entered the 360 sq.km. rectangle of unvanquished Gaza Strip, ululations turned into 'dabka' (folk dance) chanting the psalms of liberation. In the evenings Gaza beach was agog with celebrations of new-born freedom which knew no limits. From the dark shore soared the rocket of the firework display and the Palestinian revellers drank deep the cups of fedayeen and intifada glories. The Palestinians acclaimed it with a long-drawn sigh of relief and delight. None the less, the

¹¹⁹. The Times of India, 8 May 1994.
veteran Palestinians knew that the tale Palestine had to tell could not be one of final victory. It could be only the record of five thousand years tradition of resistance, and what would have to be done again in future in the never-ending intifada against Zionist terror or any foreign occupation and its relentless onslaughts. For that the children of intifada and fedayeen have to bide their time in order to rise once again for the unfinished task of total liberation of Palestine. Till that time the Palestinian rhapsody remains incomplete, at best partially sung.