Chapter IV

Diplomacy with Frontline Arab States

Following the 1948 and 1967 wars more than half of the Palestinians were condemned to be refugees mostly in Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Of the six million Palestinians at present about three million live in exile. While two million live in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and nearly one million in Israel. Ever since Palestine was wiped off the world map Arab regimes - specially the frontline states like Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt - imposed severe restrictions on the movement of the Palestinians considering them as volcano which might erupt any moment. That was the reason why the organised fedayeen movement started after 16 years (January 1965). In fact the frontline states became more or less a security belt for Israel. However, the principal contradiction remained between Zionism - whose primary purpose was to grab as much Arab land as possible - backed up by the U.S. and Arab nationalism.

After the June 1967 war the fedayeen movement came to the forefront and tried to exploit the principal contradiction between Israel and Arab states in
Following the violent confrontations between the fedayeen and the Lebanese army, the Cairo Agreement was signed in November 1969 recognizing the fedayeen presence in Lebanon. Making diplomatic gains, the PLO shifted its headquarters to Beirut and Lebanon became the main base of the Palestinian revolution. The agreement also allowed the PLO to have absolute control of the Palestinian refugee camps which became the training centres not only for the fedayeen but also for elite revolutionaries from other countries including West Germany, Italy, Japan, Iran, Oman, and some Latin American countries.

Syria never allowed the fedayeen to operate from its territories for fear of Israeli retaliation. At times it worked hand in glove with Israel - 1976 and 1983 - to suppress the PLO in Lebanon. After 1975 the PLO failed to make any gains from its diplomatic moves with Syria. Following this diplomatic debacle in the 1980s, the PLO improved its relations with Jordan and Egypt through which it wanted to open a dialogue with the U.S. The PLO's road to Washington went via Cairo.
its inter-Arab diplomacy. The principal contradiction forced the Arab states to express solidarity with the Palestinian cause. Taking advantage of the sympathy of the Arab masses, the fedayeen organised attacks against Israel from Jordan ad Lebanon which resulted in heavy Israeli retaliations.

The majority of the people in both the countries supported the fedayeen who became the symbol of a new Arab revolution and the catalyst for political and socio-economic transformations. The Arab states in general and Jordan and Lebanon in particular were alarmed at the radicalisation of their internal politics, and the presence of fedayeen on their territories was perceived as internal as well as external threat to their integrity stability and status quo.

In Jordan the fedayeen became a state within a state'. After every major violent confrontation between the fedayeen and the army an agreement was signed with the Government. The tense situation led to a civil war in September 1970 and the Hussein-Arafat agreement was signed in Cairo which was violated by the army. Although the PLO once again signed an agreement with the Jordanian Prime Minister in early 1971 it failed to make diplomatic gains because the fedayeen were expelled from Jordan in the following months.
The Fedayeen and Jordan

After the first Arab-Israel war, the West Bank was incorporated in Transjordan and the new state was called Jordan. The Palestinians constitute 60 per cent of the population of Jordan and, consequently, influence the Fedayeen movements there. King Hussein addressed the first Palestine National Congress in Jerusalem in 1964. He also supported the formation of the Palestine Liberation Organisation under the leadership of Ahmed Shukairy. King Hussein's relations were, however, strained as the latter tried to assert the Palestinian identity.

There had always been a feeling among the Palestinians that King Hussein never stood for the liberation of Palestine. The following two reasons were given: Jordan got arms from the U.S. and the monarch depended upon Israel for his survival. Whenever there was agitation against Hussein's regime, Israel attacked some part of Jordan and the people were called upon to cease the agitation lest Israel might occupy certain areas. There was always a mutual suspicion between the Palestinians and King Hussein. Hussein found that Cairo and Damascus were inciting the Palestinians to overthrow him.
He, therefore, took precautionary measures in May 1967, and introduced a Press Law which suppressed newspapers in Jordan. The Palestinians lost three of their four Arabic dailies.¹

After the June 1967 war Jordan witnessed the emergence of a large number of fedayeen organisations in its territory. For one year after the war, the fedayeen movement was at the stage of ending the phase of dispersion and vagrancy and was struggling to establish the secure base. Unity between the fedayeen and the Jordanin troops was manifested in the battle of al-Karameh on 21 March 1968. The fedayeen acquired a wider base among the Arab masses after that battle. Even King Hussein said that he was a fedayee. It was of course sheer expediency for him to identify himself with them. But, he could not win any credit from the fedayeen sympathisers who did not rely upon him. On the other hand, his supporters resented such a statement.² Soon the fedayeen who had already acquired a large quantity of arms and ammunition, became a "State within a State" and utterly disregarded the law and order of Jordan and challenged the Jordanian authority.

¹ The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 5 May 1967.
² Sunday Telegraph, 13 October 1968.
The first clash between the fedayeen and the Jordanian police took place in the last week of May 1968, when the latter imposed a ban on carrying weapons.³

Jordan's underground political parties, both of the right and the left, which were banned by Hussein since 1957, formed a National Coalition in April 1968. Sympathising with the fedayeen, they demanded resistance to Zionist occupation of the Arab territory. People felt that Jordan should prepare for war against Israel. King Hussein was under pressure to mobilize for war. But Hussein could foresee the outcome of this leap in the dark, if it had to be taken at all. Israel would certainly adopt a more aggressive policy. An Israeli aircraft had already dropped some leaflets over Amman making the point clear that Israel would increase the scale of its artillery and aerial attacks. It also threatened to occupy more Jordanian territory.⁴ It was a clear warning to the King not to allow the fedayeen to operate from his territory.

King Hussain was in a dilemma. He never wanted a war against Israel but peace was also impossible due to the presence of the fedayeen who carried

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on operations from the Jordanian territory. He, therefore, decided to contain the fedayeen. In October 1968, the fedayeen organisations were warned that they would be subject to stricter Government control. Introduction of conscription by the Jordanian Government was viewed by the fedayeen as a measure to prevent young men from joining the fedayeen organisations. On 13 October 1968, "Voice of Assifa", Al-Fatah's Cairo-based radio station, charged that the "plot to stab the Plaestinian revolution and the commando activity has begun (in Jordan). The suspicious fingers have moved to strike at our revo­lution.\(^5\) The broadcast identified the plotters as "forces of counter-revolution and traitors... receiving their orders from their masters in Washing­ton and London".\(^6\) It made the point clear that destroying the fedayeen activity was being offered as the price for political settlement of the Middle East crisis. It also charged that those seeking that settlement wanted to "preserve their shaky seats."\(^7\) Al-Fatah broadcasts further clarified the point that it did not seek to seize power in any Arab country or interfere in the internal affairs

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5. The Arab World, 14 October 1968.  
6. Ibid.  
7. Ibid.
of any Arab country but any attempt by any Arab State to interfere in the internal affairs of the fedayeen, or to strike at them, would be met with armed resistance.

First Agreement (October 1968)

The crisis, which had arisen out of the conflict between the fedayeen and the Jordanian Army, ended after an agreement was signed by the fedayeen representatives led by Arafat and the Jordanian Premier, Bahjat Talhoun, on 15 October 1968. The Government lifted the security measures which were taken against the fedayeen.

There were two facets of the fragile relationship between King Hussein and the fedayeen - the surface courtesy and the behind-the-scene reality. The surface courtesy was that they did not criticise each other openly and the King talked of co-ordination between the fedayeen and the Government. But the behind-the-scene reality was that both were completely antagonistic to each other. The King always feared that the fedayeen might overthrow him and the fedayeen expected a crackdown by him.

8. Al-Nahar (Beirut), 18 October 1968.
State within a State

Both King Hussein and the fedayeen wanted to avoid a showdown in early 1970. Hussein's aim was to reclaim some of the authority he had lost in the past two years. While negotiating with the fedayeen, Hussein pledged that the disputed laws, which dated back to 1953, would not be enforced. But the fedayeen wanted him to formally cancel the laws, thereby making it clear that those laws were officially not applicable to them.10 They also said that they would continue to issue travel documents which the Jordanian checkposts had to honour. They would continue to try the Palestinian renegades and traitors in their "courts". They would also run hospitals for Palestinian civilians and would operate a pension and sickness benefit scheme. All these parallel administrations were designed as Palestinian welfare State in embryo.11 King Hussein tolerated these activities of the fedayeen. Before the agreement was signed, the fedayeen and a number of Jordanian political leaders, including several members of Parliament, held a meeting and issued a statement calling for"new regime in Jordan" which


11 Ibid.
would help the fedayeen and place the country "on the real war footing" against Israel. That was a threat to King Hussein's regime. The right wing tribal leaders opposed the fedayeen.

Second Agreement (June 1970)

Following an attack on King Hussein and the tension that prevailed from February to June 1970 an agreement was signed between Yasser Arafat and King Hussein, the Iraqi Army Generals acted as mediators. But the fighting continued for two more days. The Syrian Government announced that it would support the fedayeen. President Nasser and Col. Moammar al-Qaddhafi of Libya sent cables to King Hussein and Yasser Arafat to end fighting. Another compromise was reached on the night of 12 June between Hussein and the fedayeen leaders. The compromise was at the expense of Hussein's authority. He had to concede to the fedayeen demand by dismissing two of his trusted Generals. The agreement Hussein signed came close to granting the fedayeen full partnership in the Jordanian affairs.

13 J.Gaspard, "Palestine- The Struggle of a People to Become a Nation", New Middle East, September 1970, pp. 30-33.
In order to show his goodwill towards the fedayeen, King Hussein appointed a new Cabinet on 28 June 1970, led by Abdel Moneim Rifai, who was in good terms with them. Six members of his Cabinet were Palestinians who sympathised with the fedayeen. King Hussein was also prepared to obtain arms from Russia as demanded by the Palestinians.

Third Agreement through Arab mediation (July 1970)

As tension increased further, the four-nation mediating committee, composed of members from Libya, Algeria, Sudan and Egypt, put forth an agreement which was signed by Yasser Arafat, the Head of the PLO, and Moneim Rifai, the Jordanian Prime Minister on 10 July 1970. It was indicated that the mediation committee would guarantee the armistice between the fedayeen and the Jordanian troops. These four countries were also to maintain a special "Appeals Court" in Amman, formed by their ambassadors, to arbitrate on any future disputes. The agreement not only conceded most of the demands of the fedayeen but also left them in control of the cities of Jordan.

Rejection of Jordanian Peace Plan

For some time, there was a confusion among the Palestinians when President Nasser and King Hussein accepted the American sponsored Rogers Plan for a peaceful settlement.16 The Palestine National Council (PNC), in its meeting held in August 1970, rejected the idea of a Palestine State on the West Bank and gave a call to sabotage the peace talks. King Hussein had repeatedly stated that once the Israelis withdraw, he would accept autonomous status for the West Bank where the Palestinians would be more or less their masters, though loosely connected with his kingdom in some kind of federation. Coupled with Nasser's acceptance of the American peace initiative, it served to increase special fedayeen operations to foil peace plans that did not recognise the PLO and the national rights of the Palestinians.

September 1970 Debacle

Just before the September 1970 crisis a fragile agreement between the fedayeen and the Jordanian Government was signed. However behind-the-scene reality (antagonistic relation) was continuing.

A large-scale confrontation took place in September 1970. Fighting between the fedayeen and the Jordanian Army continued for nine days. About 3,500 persons mostly Palestinians, were killed and more than 10,000 wounded.

The ceasefire agreement was signed by King Hussein and Yasser Arafat at Cairo on 26 September 1970, under the aegis of an inter-Arab peacemaking mission headed by Jafar al-Nuimery. President Nasser was also present there. Despite the ceasefire, relations between the fedayeen and the Jordanian Government deteriorated to a great extent. The bloodshed and the horrors of the battle led to hostilities and to the demand for vengeance for about a decade.

Violations of Hussein-Arafat Agreement of September 1970

The September confrontation was the beginning of the end of the fedayeen presence in Jordan. According to the agreement, concluded between King Hussein and Arafat, the fedayeen appeared to have obtained the freedom of movement for themselves inside Jordan although they were asked to shift

17 See Chapter III.
their bases to the border. But later developments clearly gave the evidence that there were many restrictions imposed on all the fedayeen organisations. The King was able to close down the fedayeen offices in Amman. The fedayeen bases were confined to Northern Jordan. From November 1970 to July 1971 there were several confrontations between the fedayeen and the Jordanian Army, in clear violations of the Agreement, resulting in heavy casualties. Following the clashes in January 1971, hundreds of Palestinians wanted to go to the West Bank to settle there. They were reported to have said: "We prefer to live under the oppression of the enemy than the oppression of a brother." 18

Fedayeen-Wasfi Tal Pact (January 1971)

On 14 January 1971, the Jordanian Prime Minister, Wasfi Tal, and the fedayeen announced an agreement to remove the causes of friction. The pact provided that all the fedayeen would leave Jordanian towns and move to designated bases in the hillside areas. The fedayeen militia, the part-time fighters, handed in their arms in the central storage under the control

18 The Times, 11 January 1971.
of the fedayeen Central Committee. Later on, the Jordanian Army attacked the store houses and destroyed them. Jordan made the pact in order to buy time to crush the fedayeen in due course of time.

Following the April 1971 clashes between the fedayeen and the Jordanian Army, Bahi Jadgham, Chairman of the Supreme Arab Committee set up by the Hussein-Arafat (Cairo) Agreement of 26 September to supervise a settlement between Jordanians and Palestinians, resigned from his post on 21 April 1971. He made a statement accusing King Hussein of a "patent determination to liquidate the Palestinian resistance in stages" having failed to liquidate them in a single blow in September.

In July 1971, the Jordanian Army dislodged the fedayeen from their positions in Northern Jordan also. In the same month the fedayeen were expelled from Jordan. Hundreds of fedayeen were already taken in truks and thrown across the Syrian border.

20 The Statesman (New Delhi), 14 April 1971.
21 J. Gaspard, "Palestinian Waterloo at Ajloun - Military Myths and Political Realities", New Middle East, September 1971, pp. 32-33.
The remaining fedayeen went underground in Jordan. The militia was disarmed. The fedayeen mobilisation in the country came to an end. Failure of PLO's diplomacy with Jordan resulted in the emergence of the Black September Organisation, the deadliest guerilla group, which resorted to revenge and Jordanian Premier wasfi Tal was the first target.

After eliminating the guerilla activities in Jordan, King Hussein had to put forth his proposal on 15 March 1972 for a United Arab Kingdom - a federal Jordanian-Palestinian state - consisting of the Israeli occupied West Bank and East Bank of Jordan river where Palestinians were in majority. But this was outrightly rejected by the Palestinians at the ninth PNC at Cairo on 10 April 1972. A People's Congress, in which 500 members of various Palestinian guerilla organisations participated, preceded the PNC session. This was an attempt by the PLO to mobilise the public opinion and a diplomatic move to isolate the Jordanian regime. This Congress inaugurated by President Sadat succeeded in getting the Egyptian suport for the PLO's stand against King Hussein's proposal. President Sadat declared the breaking-off of diplomatic relations with Jordan in reprisal against the proposal for United Arab Kingdom.
Fedayeen-Jordan Rapprochement

PLO's relations with King Hussein did not improve until after Yasser Arafat's ousting from Lebanon under the pressure from Syrian forces in 1983. While continuing the joint fedayeen-Lebanese resistance against Israel after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon the PLO launched forth a series of diplomatic moves to start peace talks with the U.S. Arafat became involved in a dialogue with King Hussein - Israel's chosen "inter-locuter" on the future of the West Bank. In November 1984, he convened the Palestine National Council (PNC) in Amman to endorse his dialogue with the Jordanian monarch. A week after the PNC session in Amman, Hussein was in Cairo conferring with President Mubarak. The talks resulted in a joint communique on 3 December which called for an international peace conference under the UN auspices, of course, with the PLO participation.

Once Arafat won the approval of the PNC he proceeded on 11 February 1985 to conclude an agreement with King Hussein, much to the chagrin of PFLP and PDFLP. This agreement provided most importantly

24 Sam Younger, no. 22.
for a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to any peace talks whose Palestinian members would be decided by the PLO. This agreement was strongly backed by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and was known as Hussein-Mubarak-Arafat initiative. Egypt, which was treated as a pariah in the Arab World since its peace treaty with Israel, had resumed diplomatic relations with Jordan in October 1984 and played an important role in this agreement.

Diplomacy with U.S. through Jordan

The day was set for the most emphatic personal peace effort of them all: King Hussein's Washington visit at the end of May 1985. The monarch of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, speaking in the Rose Garden of the White House on 29 May 1985, declared:

I have assured the President that on the basis of the Jordan-PLO accord of 11 February, and as a result of my recent talks with the PLO, and in view of our genuine desire for peace, we are willing to negotiate within the context of an international conference, a peaceful settlement on the basis of the pertinent United Nations resolutions, including Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. We are offering a unique opportunity for peace, which might not be with us for long.25

When King Hussein was asked by media persons whether the Palestinians had agreed to negotiate

on the basis of 242 and 338, he affirmed emphatically: "Every word I have made in my statement is a result of agreement between us and the PLO." 26

King Hussein's courage was recognised in the U.S. circles. But there was to be no follow-up from the American side. The peace efforts were foiled by the hijacking of TWA flight 847 on 14 June and Israeli bombing of the PLO headquarters in the later part of 1985. However, the peace efforts were not entirely abandoned and revived in 1990s. 27

The PLO-Jordan relations deteriorated in 1986 when King Hussein closed down the PLO offices which had reopened earlier in the country. Some Palestinian leaders were arrested. 28 The under-current of this bitter situation could be attributed to King Hussein's renewed demand for exercising authority over West Bank. The King very much wanted to fly the Jordanian flag over Jerusalem. He also wanted to open economic activities in the occupied West Bank through a banking system to be controlled by Jordan. Any such activity without recognising the rights of the Palestinian people was seen by the PLO as a conspiracy. 29

26 Ibid.
27 For details see the Chapter VI.
29 Ibid.
King Hussein did not sever his connections with the West Bank and its Palestinian population. It seems he had a very nostalgic memory and sentimental attachment for that region occupied by Israel and then the PLO reasserting its claim.

Like his grand father, King Abdullah, he has a sense of Arab nationalism that does not allow him to focus solely on parochial Amman-centred interests. And as a Hashemite descendant of the Prophet Mohammad, he feels a duty to defend the holy city of Jerusalem. Additionally, a vivid youthful memory of his grand father's assassination at the grand mosque of Jerusalem undoubtedly reinforces the king's attachment to the West Bank and especially Jerusalem. 30

These were some of the reasons for which King Hussein, seen as a traitor by the Palestinians, took 14 long years after the Rabat Conference (1974) to lay down his claim to West Bank, his reassertion of his grand father's claim of 'King of Palestine' and the dream of flying Jordanian flag over Jerusalem.

King Hussein would go down in history as an Arab Muslim leader who not only lost Jerusalem in war and then massacred several thousand Palestinians who were fighting for the liberation of Palestine.

He realised this fact very late and proceeded to drop all claims and ties to Jerusalem and West Bank in 1988. By late 1980s and early 1990s King Hussein started playing a constructive role for the Arab cause. His bold stand during the Gulf War in defiance of the U.S. policy was highly appreciated. There might have been a sad repentence within himself and a requiem for the Palestinian martyrs. On the part of King Hussein, there was a growing realisation — under the force of the inevitable circumstances — that it is by relinquishing the responsibility for West Bank, and not by claiming it, that he has a chance to be remembered by the Arab people. However, his desire to be the custodian of holy places of Jerusalem—endorsed by Israel on 25 July 1994—was like the swansong of a crusty old guard. But the main reason for giving up his claim over the West Bank was the intifada that started in December 1987 bringing about cataclysmic changes.

The Fedayeen and Lebanon

The fedayeen presence was also felt in Lebanon which harbours nearly half-a-million Palestinian refugees and has common border with Israel. The fedayeen operations against Israel from the South
Lebanon split the Lebanese people leading to perpetual crises and devastation of the country. While the majority of the Lebanese led by the leftist political parties supported the fedayeen attacks against Israel from the Lebanese soil, the rightist political parties opposed them. The Lebanese Army was at war with the fedayeen who, with the support of their allies, became a "State within a state". From 1968 to early 1980s Lebanon witnessed civil war between the Palestinians and their leftist Lebanese allies on the one hand, and the rightist Christians-Lebanese Army supported by Israel, and the U.S. on the other. Every major armed conflict between the two resulted in uneasy and fragile peace agreement or truce whose sanctity lay in violation rather than observance. Prime Ministers resigned so often that it was difficult to keep track of the Government which existed more in the newspaper columns than in reality.

The rightist Tripartite Alliance was a coalition of three pro-Western Christian parties - the National Liberal Party, the Phalangist Party and the National Block Party while the leftist alliance, comprised the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP),
the Communist Party, the Baath Party and the Arab Nationalist Movement. Although there was a tendency to portray the conflict as a communal strife between the Christians and Muslims, it was, till early 1980s, an ideological confrontation. There were some Christians and Muslims on both sides.

Lebanon's confessional political system as per the 1943 covenant has some peculiar characteristics. The President has to be a Maronite Christian, Prime Minister a Sunni Muslim and the Speaker of the National assembly (Parliament) a Shia. Although there is proportional representation of various communities in the Parliament, cabinet and civil service, Christians constituted 80 per cent of the Lebanese Army. While the Christians were well off, the Muslims constituting more than 80 per cent of the Lebanese population were poor. The underprivileged Muslims and the down trodden saw in the fedayeen a catalyst for a radical socio-economic transformation of the Lebanese system. The privileged Christians viewed them as a threat to their socio-economic status. The Phalangists maintained a secret army to terrorise the Muslims who had earlier demanded socio-economic changes. In order to maintain a

balance between these communities, Gen. Fuad Chehab, former President, had made a policy after the 1958 lip service to the pan-Arab line so as to satisfy the Muslims without offending the Christians. But this Chehabist posture began to crumble with the beginning of the crisis as a result of fedayeen presence. Chehabism could manage with Nasserism but not with the Palestinian revolutionary ideology.

After the June 1967 War, the Phalangist Party led by Pierre Gemayel - who had established the party after being inspired by Hitler in 1936 - wanted the "internationalisation of Lebanon's neutrality" so as to make the country the Switzerland of the Middle East. The rightists emphasised on the Lebanese nationalism, a facade for pro-West and pro-Israel policy, as opposed to the mainstream Arab nationalism which advocated struggle against Zionist Israel. Lebanon experienced turmoil, violence, skirmishes, pitched battles, street fighting between the fedayeen and the Lebanese Army - Phalangist militia supported by Israeli military and air attacks.

Three major political crises occurred in Lebanon on 28 December 1968, 23 April 1969 and 11 August 1969 following the Israeli air attacks on the country.
The *fedayeen* succeeded in their diplomacy—after armed conflicts with the Lebanese Army—to get assurance from the Government that Lebanon would support the Palestinian cause by all means, coordinate with the Arab states, adhere to the Arab League and Arab summit resolutions, and introduce conscription, fortification and arming of the border villages.\(^\text{32}\) The August-October 1969 crisis was followed by a major treaty between Lebanon and the PLO known as the Cairo Agreement which resulted in diplomatic gains for the *fedayeen*.

**The Cairo Agreement (November 1969)**

The August-October 1969 crisis reached such alarming proportions that the U.S. State Department expressed concern, interpreted by the leftists as American threat of intervention in Lebanon. Syria sealed off her border with Lebanon and threatened to take retaliatory action unless the Lebanese Army stopped attacking the *fedayeen*. There were anti-Lebanese demonstrations in some of the Arab capitals. Iraq, Algeria, Egypt and Libya issued statements supporting the *fedayeen*. When the situation in Lebanon further deteriorated, the Lebanese Army

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32 Ibid.
Commander, Maj-Gen. Emile Bustany, and Yasser Arafat signed an agreement on 3 November 1969 in Cairo in the presence of Lt.-Gen. Mohammed Fawzi, the Egyptian War Minister and Commander-in-Chief, and Mahmoud Riad, the Egyptian Foreign Minister. The agreement emphasised two points: the Lebanese sovereignty; and the interest of the Palestinian revolution and that of the Arab nation at large. The details of the agreement were kept secret. The status quo ante October 1969 was restored. Whatever may be the gains or losses, the fedayeen presence and their right to armed struggle against Israel were recognised in Lebanon. The Cairo Agreement became a diplomatic instrument and the basis of fedayeen - Lebanon bilateral relationship.

After the Cairo Agreement, Rashid Karami, who again became Prime Minister with much difficulty, formed his Cabinet on 26 November 1969. This Cabinet was formed after a seven-month crisis. In January 1970, Maj-Gen. Bustany was replaced from his post as the Army Commander. The fedayeen and the Lebanese Government could not come to terms on the status of the refugee camps. The Government maintained

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33 The agreement was broadcast simultaneously by three Radios: Radio Lebanon, "Voice of al-Assifa", and Cairo Radio, The Aab World, 4 November 1969.
that the fedayeen should not give military training in the camps. The fedayeen rejected that interpretation of the Cairo Agreement. The two parties were also at loggerheads on the fedayeen bases through which they infiltrated into the Israeli occupied areas. Before the September crisis in Jordan the fedayeen strength in Lebanon was estimated at about 3,000. But they had absolute control over all the 15 Palestinian refugee camps and extended their control to some adjoining residential areas in Beirut and Tripoli. After the Agreement the number of fedayeen increased in Lebanon.

Fatah Land in Lebanon

Taking advantage of the Cairo Agreement, the fedayeen who were expelled from Jordan, entered Lebanon via Deraa in Syria. The Palestinian leadership reorganised their units and formed a new brigade called the Yarmuk Brigade, from the large number of soldiers and officers who had deserted the Jordanian army. After acquiring the experience of fighting regular war with the Jordanian army and the al-Karameh battle, it was time for the guerillas to form batta-

lions and brigades in order to engage the Israeli army in regular combats in addition to the guerilla tactics. The fedayeen set up new bases in the Arkoub, the rough terrain and inaccessible mountain area of south-east Lebanon. The Arkoub was soon to be popularly known as Fatah land. 38

On 21 June 1972, Israeli army units landed by helicopter and attacked fedayeen bases in the Arkoub. Israeli tanks also participated in the attack with the avowed purpose of killing the guerillas and finishing off their Arkoub base. For four days the guerillas confronted the heavy assaults of the Israeli army. Despite large scale deployment of tanks and helicopters, the Israeli forces were forced to withdraw. The fedayeen fought bravely holding their ground. 39 The Arkoub battle revived the memories of al-Karameh raising the fedayeen morale high. It helped them overcome the bitter memories of their debacles in Jordan. Yasser Arafat and al-Fatah leadership regained their stature and authority. The waning smile on Arafat's face reappeared with radiating charm and glow as he had been a victim of assassination attempt after the Jordan debacle. The Palestinian revolution and

38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
the guerilla forces, who were undergoing a process of reorganisation, passed their first test.40

1973 Crisis

After failing to wipe off the fedayeen presence in the Arkoub, the Fatah Land, the Israelis organised a number of air raids on Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon and conspiratorial attacks on some of the Palestinian leaders. One of them was the assassination of Ghassan Kanafani, the official spokesman of the PFLP, and a prominent litterateur and editor of al Hadaf in July 1972. Mossad, the Israeli Secret Service, had placed a bomb in his car and unarmed Kanafani was killed in the booby trap. Kanafani's funeral procession was one of the biggest - second only to Nasser's. The funeral procession was a revolt against the Lebanese government and a call for revenge against Israel.41

One of the major Israeli commando raids, in collaboration with forces in Lebanese army and Deuxième Bureau, the intelligence department, was on the three top PLO leaders on 10 April 1973 at Rue Verdun in Beirut. The three

40 Ibid.
leaders killed by the Israeli special units were: Abu Youssef el-Najjar, no. 3 in al Fatah; Kamal Butros Nasser, poet-writer, member of the PLO Executive Committee, official PLO spokesman and editor-in-chief of Falastin al-Thawra; and Kamal Adwan, engineer, member of Al-Fatah Central Committee responsible for the organisation of the revolution in the occupied areas. Once again Lebanon was in turmoil. The majority of the Lebanese people under the leftist leadership could not reconcile with the flagrant violation of Lebanese sovereignty. The Lebanese Government resigned and succeeded by a military Government. Pitched battles were fought between the Lebanese Army and the fedayeen in May 1973. Army's tanks were knocked out by the bazookas of the fedayeen who could repulse the attacks. The Lebanese forces resorted to bombardments on The refugee camps. But the fedayeen could defend themselves.

Melkart Protocol

Some Arab states under the leadership of Egypt and Syria helped the conflicting parties open negotiations. On 17-18 May 1973 the 'Melkart Protocols' were signed confirming the continued validity of

42 Ibid.
the Cairo Agreement with precise elucidation.

A Joint High Commission of the Lebanese Army command and the Palestine Armed struggle Command (PASC) was set up to resolve any misunderstanding or problems between the two sides. Although the conflict was over temporarily the seeds of bigger confrontation had been sown.

Pre-Civil War Situation

The Skirmishes, confrontations and pitched battles culminated in a civil war in 1975 that devastated and destroyed Lebanon. The causes of the Lebanese civil war were: (a) the Israeli bombardments in the south Lebanon forced the villagers to flee to Beirut which they thought was "safe"; (b) agriculture suffered a great deal in the countryside and farming families flocked to slums of Beirut known as the 'misery belt', (c) lack of social content in Lebanon's economic success; (d) socio-economic imbalances in the economy benefitted neither all Lebanese nor all of Lebanon; (d) enrichment of Beirut at the cost of the periphery: the city accounted for more than half of Lebanon's population, over


44 Deirdre Collings and Jill Tansley, Peace for Lebanon: Obstacles, Challenges, Prospects, A report of an international research project and series of workshops carried out in Ottawa from September 1990 through November 1991, no. 4-6.
two-thirds of overall employment, the entire state administration, all of country's higher education, and 95 per cent of its banking activity; 45 40 per cent of the rural population crowded Beirut; (f) the slum dwellers identified themselves with Palestinians of the refugee camps and envied the riches of the Maronite Christian east Beirut – a class struggle between the proletariats and the bourgeoisie; (g) the recognition of the PLO by Arab states in 1974 emboldened the activities of the fedayeen who were seen as the harbingers of a new political and socio-economic order.

Although the Muslims constituted the overwhelming majority the national pact (Covenant) prevented any political reflection of this demographic reality and maintained the status quo which helped the wealthy Maronite Christian minority. The Muslims demanded greater share in the Lebanese Government and socio-economic structure. Lebanon was ripe for a civil war, an uprising of the proletariat.

45 Hasan Charif quoted in Ibid., Ahmad Sbaiti's observations are also included in the report.
The Lebanese Civil War 1975-76

The Lebanese civil war was triggered off by a massacre on 13 April 1975 when rightist Maronite militiamen stopped a bus in the Christian area of Ain Rummaneh and murdered its passengers, Palestinian men, women and children. This was the single spark that made a prairie fire in the whole of Lebanon for 18 months. It was an ideological war between the rightist Christians and the leftist Muslims supported by leftist Christians and intellectuals.46

Lebanese slums like Karantina, Maazra and Palestinian refugee camp Tel Al-Zaatar were the worst affected. The first two slums were attacked by Lebanese Front militia and pulverised to the ground. Hundreds of people were killed in cold blood. the siege of Tel Al-Zaatar in east Beirut by rightist militiamen continued for 57 days. A number of children died for want of water. Water became as costly as blood. Women were killed while fetching water for their children. Arab League mediation succeeded in bringing about an agreement to evacuate the camp. But it was violated by the rightists. While leaving the refugee camps several

hundred of them were massacred by the militia of Gemayel and Chamoun.\textsuperscript{47} The Red Cross was a silent spectator to the ghastly scene and dance of death. The survivors shifted to the town of Damour, south of Beirut. The theme of brave resistance put up by Palestinian men, women and children at Tel Al-Zaatar entered some of the Palestinian songs.

Lebanon stood between the Scylla and Charybdis of civil war in which 100,000 were killed and 500,000 displaced during 1975-76. It was, indeed, apocalyptic in the history of the country. The Tripartite Alliance of the rightist Christian parties underwent a change in nomenclature. During this time it was known as the Lebanese Front consisting of Phalangists under Pierre Gemayel, the National Liberal Party under Camille Chamoun, the militias of President Suleiman Franjeeh and the National Block Party led by Raymond Edde.\textsuperscript{48}

The idea of maintaining a private secret militia had originated in Pierre Gemayel's mind, for the first time, as early as 1936 when he had visited the Nazi camps. Inspired by Hitler and Mussolini, Gemayel

\textsuperscript{47} Abdullah Frangi, no. 37, pp. 127-28.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., pp. 128-30.
came back to Lebanon and formed the Phalangist Party as an Arab counterpart of the Nazi and Fascist parties of Europe. 49 This background of the rightist leader is significant in view of the situation that accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s. Initially the avowed purpose of the Phalangists was to fight the Arab National Liberation Forces which commanded influence in Syria and Lebanon. The Phalangist Party was encouraged during the French Mandate (1920-1945) in Lebanon. 50 The Lebanese Front's policy was, in 1975-76, as usual, to defend the Lebanese system which safeguards political and economic predominance of the well-off Christians, though they had been reduced to a minority numbering not more than 25 to 30 per cent. 51 The rightist Lebanese Front were called isolationist forces as they were against the interest of Arab nationalism. These isolationist forces received considerable number of arms and ammunition from the CIA and Israel. 52 It also demanded the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon. The leftist forces - as opposed to the rightist Lebanese Front - were known as the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) which comprised of the socialists, Nasserites,

49 Mehmood Hussain, no. 46, 50 Ibid. 51 Ibid. 52 Ibid.
communist parties and organisations led by Ibrahim Kuleilat, Mohsen Ibrahim and George Hawi, and both the wings of the Ba'ath Party and the Syrian Socialist - Nationalist arty. This leftist/nationalist alliance, LNM, was led by the same Kamal Jumblat, the Druze leader and Chairman of the Progressive Socialist Party. The Shia Amal movement led by Nabi Berri was also a member of the alliance. 53

The Lebanese National Movement called for political and economic reforms, the abolition of political feudalism and denominationalism, the introduction of a proportional representation and effective changes in the economic sphere. It repeated its earlier demand for an Arab Lebanon and stronger support for the Palestinian revolution. 54

After the massacre of Palestinians at Ain Rummaneh, the PLO could not remain neutral. The Lebanese Front prepared the ground for the PLO to intervene and to side with its natural allies, the leftist forces of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM). 55

53 Abdullah Frangi, no. 37, p. 129.
54 Ibid.
55 Mehmood Hussain, no. 46.
After months of fighting, punctuated by cease-fire agreements which lasted for varying periods but never long, the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) backed up by the PLO controlled nearly 80 per cent of the area of Lebanon. Their dream of turning Beirut into an 'Arab Hanoi' was almost coming true. The Syrian intervention in support of the rightist Christian forces, the Lebanese Front, shattered that dream.

**Arab League's Mediation**

Although the Arab League's mediating role had begun fairly early in the War, it did not get momentum until Syria, Egypt, and the PLO seemingly reconciled their differences concerning PLO latitude in Lebanon. The Syrian presence at the Riyadh and Cairo summits reflected the tacit recognition by Egypt and the Arab League of Syria's predominant role in Lebanon. The decisions approved at the summits included an Arab guarantee of Lebanon's sovereignty, unity, and independence; the creation of an Arab Deterrent Force (ADF) which was to assist the Lebanese government in reasserting its national authority; a guarantee of the Cairo Agreement and

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56 Ibid.
a recognition of the Palestinians' right to armed struggle; the formation of a Committee of Four charged with the responsibility of assisting President Elias Sarkis to implement the withdrawal of armed personnel from Lebanon; and the return of public institutions to Government authority.

The implementation of the proposals was halted by the confrontation between the leftist LMN and the rightist Lebanese Front. A proliferation of both internal and external actors further confused the situation in which the Arab League could not guarantee Lebanon's sovereignty as Israel and its Lebanese allies (Lebanese Front) committed acts of aggression in the south, and the PLO had to fight the Lebanese Army and the Arab Deterrent Force (ADF). The Syrian army support had given the rightist Lebanese Front a new lease of life. They regained the lost ground. On 29 June 1976 they occupied Jisr al-Basha, a Palestinian refugee camp on the eastern outskirts of Beirut known as Nabaa. On 12 August the siege of Tel Al-Zaatar ended with the ghastly massacre of 3,000 people. Earlier, the Lebanese Front of the rightist Christians did not even spare the Palestinian camp north of Beirut, al-Dubayya, a majority

59 Ibid.
of whose inhabitants were Maronite Palestinians.\(^60\)

The Syrian offensive continued, and on 12 October one of the fiercest battles of the war was fought between the Palestinian - Leftist alliance and the Syrian army at Bhamdun.\(^61\)

The major obstacle to the implementation of the 16 October 1976 Riyadh summit decision was the inclusion of Syrian presence in the ADF. The overwhelming Syrian presence in it ensured a confrontation with the PLO. The conservative Arab regimes wanted to see that the PLO was cut to its size. Although the Syrian presence in Lebanon had been a fait accompli it could neither defend Lebanon, nor restore normalcy. When Syria failed to control the PLO Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978. The PLO and the leftist forces fought the Israelis. There had been official Israeli collaboration with the Lebanese rightists to liquidate the PLO.

Following the 1978 invasion, Israel began its long occupation of South Lebanon and the cabinet of Prime Minister Salim el-Hoss resigned. The summit's proposals concentrated on the external

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61 *The Times of India*, 13 October 1976. Also see the sub-chapter, The Fedayeen and Syria.
rather than the internal dimensions of Lebanon's problems. The Higher Committee of the Arab League held additional meetings to discuss internal and regional security dimensions of the war, but was unable to facilitate implementation of the resolutions reached at the Riyadh and Cairo summits. 62

In 1980, President Sarkis issued the Fourteen Points for National Reconciliation, a platform that was to complement the Arab League's effort by fostering domestic reconciliation. Among other measures, the plan called for the reestablishment of Lebanese sovereignty, an equilibrated system of power-sharing, close cooperation with Syria, support for Palestinian cause, and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 425 which calls for the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon and the deployment of a UN force in the south. 63 For a variety of reasons, largely the continued polarisation of actors on the left and the right, this programme failed to move the situation closer to a settlement. The Fourteen Points neglected to specify mechanisms

62 Deirdre Collings and Jill Tansley, no. 44, pp.15-16.
63 Ibid.
that would advance the reforms they advocated. The qualified support from Syria and the PLO, as well as Israeli obstruction in South Lebanon added to the stalemate. 64

War System

Both domestic and external reasons were responsible for the break down of peace settlement in Lebanon. The failure of all the peace plans proposed between 1976 and 1982 could be traced exclusively to events in West Asia. Hafez Ziad considered these proposals simply knee-jerk reactions to external events rather than serious plans. However, the period between 1976 and 1982 established a very dangerous trend: the consolidation of the war system in Lebanon.

In 1980 and 1981, the Israeli army carried out a number of commando landing raids and attacks designed to test the Palestinian defensive positions, their readiness for battle and their strength. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982 and the massacres at the Palestinian refugee camps of

64 Naghat Nasr quoted in Ibid.
65 Hafez Ziad quoted in Ibid
Sabra and Shatila in September of that year marked a fundamental turning point. After 1982, the Israeli presence on the ground and the growing power of the militias created tremendous upheaval inside Lebanon. Amal Shamma summed up the post-1982 Lebanese situation very correctly:

Before 1982, the dialogue was political and about the political system - the debate was between those who wanted to change the political system and those who wanted to protect the status quo. But after 1982, the dialogue was less about the protection or reform of the system, and more about the protection of various sects. Instead of representing political platforms, leaders were now representing sectarian groups. The secular tone of reformist discussions was replaced with factional/militia concerns. 67

**Failure of the U.S.-Israel Diplomacy**

By 1983 the Palestinian fedayeen, after their evacuation from Beirut in 1982, staged a come back to Lebanon camps to ensure the safety of the refugee camps and to put up resistance against the Israeli occupation.

On 17 May 1983 an Agreement was signed between the Lebanese and Israeli Governments under the auspices of

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66 The massacres of Palestinian men, women and children at Sabra and Shatila were organised by the Phalangists and the Lebanese Front backed by the Israelis.

67 No. 44, p. 16.
of the U.S. Government. It was intended to insulate Lebanon from the Arab-Israeli conflict, that is, from the Palestinian question and the state-to-state dimension of the conflict which was the sole purpose of Israeli's war in Lebanon in 1982. It called for commitments to Israel that would supersede all other commitments to Lebanon's Arab neighbours, and in particular to the Joint Defence Pact of the Arab League. Other articles of the agreement banned armed Palestinian Organisations, nullified previous accords between the Lebanese Government and the PLO.68

This agreement failed to end hostilities in Lebanon. By September 1983, intensive fighting between the Progressive Socialist Party (PSP) and the Lebanese Front broke out in the Shouf. The fighting spilled over into Beirut, and American and Multi-National Forces came under fire.

The 17th May 1983 Agreement was cancelled in March 1984 as there was Shiite-Druze rebellion against President Bashir Gemayel who had been installed as President under Israeli guns. The abrogation

68 Asad Abukhalit's observations in Deirdre Collings and Jill Tansley, no. 44, p. 17.
of this Agreement reflected, in part, the reassertion of Syrian authority in Lebanon by 1984. The Agreement was totally unacceptable to the majority of Lebanese because it embodied the desires of Israel alienating Lebanon from its Arab context.

To the Lebanese opposition groups, the PLO was a useful political ally, but by the mid-1980s the close ties began to fade. As long as the Israeli and the U.S.-MNF troops were present in Lebanon the leftists under the Palestinian guideline fought the former unitedly. The U.S. and MNF troops suffered heavy losses and withdrew in 1984. Israel also suffered heavy losses and withdrew from Lebanon in 1985, shelving its dream of "greater Israel".

Fedayeen as Mediators

Events in the mid-1980s, however, led to a renewed Palestinian military presence in Lebanon. Hostilities between large sections of the Palestinian movement and Syria resulted in Palestinian rapprochement with former Lebanese foes and battles with former Lebanese allies. Mainstream Palestinian factions became allied with various Christian militias,
including the Lebanese Front, because they were all hostile to Syria. 69

By the end of the 1980s, most Lebanese perceived the Palstinians as relatively neutral who enriched Lebanese economy and even served as mediators between Lebanese intrasectarian combatants. In 1989, the Palstinians helped to mediate during the intra-Christian fighting between Geagea's militia and General Aoun's army units, as well as during the intra-Shi'ite fighting between the Amal and Hizboallah militias. 70

Taif Accord (October 1989)

The Taif Accord, adopted by Lebanese deputies in Taif, Saudi Arabia, on 22 October 1989 at the urging of the Arab League, has been partially successful in allowing the Lebanese Government, backed by the newly reconstituted Lebanese Army – which include officers and soldiers from all groups and confessions – and Syrian forces, to reassert authority in large parts of the country. 71 Beirut is free of

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69 Rosemary Sayigh detailed some of the pressing socio-economic problems confronting Palstinians in Lebanon, including displacement, homelessness, employment restrictions, unemployment, decline in living standards, and inadequate educational and health services. See Deirdre Collings and JillTansley, no. 44, pp. 35-39.

70 Ibid., p. 35.

71 For the details of the Taif Accord, see, Ibid., pp.125-36.
militias for the first time since the war began, and some of the militias throughout the country have been disarmed: Amal, the PSP, the Lebanese Front, and the Palestinian groups loyal to Syria laid down their weapons in April 1991. Pro-Arafat Al-Fatah forces initially refused to accept these terms, but, following the confrontation with the Lebanese Army in July 1991, at Saidon, they agreed to lay down arms. As the peace process was about to start the PLO unilaterally decided to end its operation from Lebanon against Israel. The PLO, however, retained some of the arms and ammunition to defend themselves against the Israeli attacks. The three other groups who have refused to disarm are: Hizboallah, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and the South Lebanese Army.

Even after signing of the Israeli-PLO Accord on 13 September 1993, the confrontation between Hizboallah and Israeli forces continued. The tension would, however, continue till Israel signs a peace accord with Lebanon and vacates its occupation of south Lebanon.

72 Ibid., pp. 28-29.
73 Ibid.
The question that arises is: What is the future of more than 500,000 Palestinians in Lebanon? The Israeli-PLO Accord does not say anything about these refugees. There is a provision in the Accord for the return of the Palestinians (from West Bank and Ghaza) who became refugees during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. But the Palestinians in Lebanon became refugees in 1948 and they are from Galilee and coastal Palestine, that became Israel proper. The Accord, at the moment, is silent on their return. But it cannot be avoided during the final status negotiations likely to begin by May 1996.

The Fedayeen Syria

Whereas the fedayeen were opposed by the regimes in Jordan and Lebanon they got political and military help in Syria. The left-wing of the Baath Party led by Nureddin Attasi ousted Michael Aflak in 1966. The left-wing was in favour of a popular war against Israel. It set up Al-Saiga, the fedayeen organisation, under its control. The ruling left-wing Baathists were also close to the PDF. They allowed the fedayeen to get military training in the Syrian military

training school. One of the reasons for the Syrian support to the fedayeen was that the left-wing regime there wanted to build up the image of Syria as a revolutionary State. Egypt and Jordan had accepted the UN Security Council Resolution of 22 November 1967 but Syria rejected it and declared that popular war of liberation was the only path to extinguish the Zionist State of Israel. Also, the Golan Heights were still under the Israeli occupation and the fedayeen could be used as an instrument to pressurise the Israelis.

Syria's revolutionary postures, however, proved ineffective. The Syrians did not help the fedayeen in September 1970, when they were confronting the Jordanian Army. The PLA contingents attached to the Syrian Army crossed the border and stood beside the fedayeen in northern Jordan. But they failed to secure air cover from the Syrian Air Force which was under the Defence Minister, Hafez al-Assad who belonged to the right wing of Baath Party.  

Hafez al-Assad led a coup and ousted President Attasi's left wing from power in November 1970. For more than a year Assad had accused Attasi of following a Communist line. Al-Saiqa group was also seen as a possible rival for power. The Army was jealous of the left-wing political faction's control over Al-Saiqa. 76

Assad's Restrictions on Fedayeen

After Assad took over as President restrictions were imposed on the fedayeen. Some of the top Al-Saiqa leaders were arrested by the Syrian Army. Among the arrested leaders were: Dhafi Jumai'ani, Al-Saiqa leader in Jordan, who came from a prominent East Bank tribe which sided with the fedayeen at the time of confrontation with the Jordanian Army in September 1970; Hassan al-Khatib, Al-Saiqa's representative in the Executive Committee of the PLO; Youssef Al Burji and Youssef Katanani. 77

Al-Saiqa was brought under the control of the Syrian army. In the past, the fedayeen had received Chinese arms through PLO's Damascus office. In July 1971, a consignment of Chinese arms intended for the PLA,


77 Al-Kifah (Beirut's pro-Iraq paper), quoted in The Arab World, 20 June 1971.
including 200 tanks, thousands of machine-guns, and millions of rounds of ammunition, was seized by the Syrian army at the port of Latakia.\textsuperscript{78} When Yasser Arafat asked for their release, President Assad said that if it was done, the PLA would be better equipped than the Syrian army. "Do you want to take over our country?" was his reply.\textsuperscript{79} Obtensibly, Assad's regime was threatened by the presence of the fedayeen in Syria. Despite this contradiction between the fedayeen and the Syrian regime, the militant attitude of the Syrian Government towards Israel, because of the pressure of the Arab masses, helped the Palestinian resistance upto 1975.

**Anti-Fedayeen Role**

The Syrian role reversed in June 1976 when it intervened in Lebanon in favour of the rightist Christian forces. Seeing that 80 per cent of the Lebanese territory had been captured by the leftist forces backed by the PLO, Syria sent its troops into Lebanon and fought pitched battles with the PLO.\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{80} Mehmood Hussain, no. 57, p. 868.
From 1976 to 1993 Syria was pre-occupied with two things: subjugating the PLO to the Syrian Government authority, and maintaining its pre-eminent position in Lebanon. On the one hand it tried to weaken the PLO, its fighting forces and leadership and on the other hand it tried to be the 'biggest champion' of anti-Israel front. President Hafez al-Assad has been making desperate attempts to be 'a great Arab leader' and Syria a 'regional Arab power' to counter Iraq.

According to Professor Naomi Joy Weinberger, Syria was very much upset when the leader of the Lebanese National Movement (LNM) refused to accept a February 1976 plan put forth by Syria for reforming the Lebanese political system. Although the Syrian proposal fell short of demands for radical redistribution of power advanced by LNM, President Hafez al-Assad expected to exact political compliance. After all Syria was one of the suppliers of military assistance to the LNM, the Lebanese leftists who were the allies of the PLO.

As Weinberger put it: "The Syrian ego was devastatingly hurt when the PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat

81 Naomi Joy Weinberger, no. 60, p. 8.
refused to break ranks with Kamal Jumblat after Syrian - LNM relations went sour. It was, of course, Syria's miscalculation to expect Arafat to sever relations with the Lebanese left which at that time had wanted to turn Beirut into an 'Arab Hanoi' in their war of liberation against Israel.

Syria's dramatic shift of alignments in the midst of the Lebanese civil war might be astonishing for the outside world but not for the Palestinians.

A leftist regime in Lebanon would be a threat not only to Syria but also to other Arab regimes. A revolutionary wave might sweep the Arab World. Even the conservative regimes knew that the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-76 was not a struggle between the Christians and Muslims but between the rightists and the leftists on ideological ground. President Assad thought he might be sandwiched between a leftist Lebanon and Iraq.

The immediate precipitant for Syrian intervention was an attack on two Maronite villages in northern Lebanon by maverick units of the Lebanese

82 Ibid.
83 Mehmood Hussain, no. 57.
Arab Army in May 1976. The villagers' telegram to President Assad appealing for Syrian assistance was used as a pretext by Syria to intervene. On 1 June Kamal Jamblat charged that "the Syrians pressured one of the officers in the north to commit aggression against two towns," so as to provide a pretext for the Syrian intervention. 84 "No one asked them to intervene," said Jumblat. 85 Maronite leader Raymond Edde also discounted the claim by Syrian Foreign Minister Kaddam that Syria intervened on the request of Lebanese authorities and a large segment of Lebanese public opinion. 86

President Faranjeeh and Elias Sarkis insisted that they did not know beforehand of Syria's plan to intervene. Faranjeeh, however, justified the Syrian intervention as a necessary means for "implementing the constitutional document, with first priority to the Cairo Agreement." 87 The Syrian intervention to suppress the leftists and the PLO in Lebanon was an open secret deal between the rightist Christians and Syria.

84 Al-Nahar, 2 June 1976.
85 Ibid.
86 Al-Nahar, 5 June 1976.
87 Al-Nahar, 6 June 1976.
Syria's Secret Diplomacy with Israel

The direct military confrontation between the Syrian Army and the PLO helped no one but Israel and the U.S. There was a tacit understanding between the US-Israel and Syria. "The degree of coordination with the US that preceded Syria's limited military intervention in Lebanon in January 1976 and the indirect ('red line') agreement with Israel were not publicly known at the time." Since 1976 there had been an unwritten rules of the game between Syria and Israel concerning Lebanon. They complemented each other consistently and systematically.

It was quite embarrassing for the Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin to be present in Damascus between 1-4 June 1976, when Syria intervened in Lebanon. However, after losing their base in Egypt in 1972, the Soviets could hardly afford to annoy Syria and ask Assad to stop fighting the PLO. According to Syrian sources, Kosygin told Assad that "While the USSR approved of Syrian actions in Lebanon, the Syrians should not expect any public declarations of support thanks to".

because of the Soviet commitment to the Palestinians.\(^89\) Nevertheless the joint communique issued at the close of Kosygin's visit contained a veiled endorsement of the Syrian action in Lebanon.\(^90\) The Soviet Union sacrificed the PLO in the interest of Syria - a diplomacy that helped Israel and the U.S.

Syria's tacit understanding with Israel vis-à-vis PLO became clear during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in June 1982, despite their disagreements on other issues and limited confrontations. In February 1982, Assad delivered a message to Israel through an informal channel he often used - Damascus correspondent of Radio Monte Carlo, Louis Farres - in which he expressed his reluctance to confront the Israeli forces in Lebanon. The Syrian leadership hoped that fighting between Syria and Israel could be avoided or at least minimised. The message was explicit and clarified the threshold of Syrian tolerance:

> If the Israeli intervention takes the form of strikes against Palestinian positions and camps in Lebanon, Syria's intervention will remain limited. (But) if it is a matter of occupation, Syria will certainly give the Palestinians and

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the Lebanese patriotic forces all the means necessary for checking the occupation and turning the occupier's life into an unbearable hell, and this in addition to conducting the battles that will be called for in a time of need. It is no secret that Israel's military force is now larger than Syria's; therefore, the possibility of Syria's turning to a full-scale war at a time and a place determined by Israel should be excluded...91

Syria, in accordance with this message, remained neutral when Israel launched aggression to liquidate the PLO in Lebanon on 6 June 1982. It emboldened the Israeli leadership to launch a large-scale war for nearly three months. It became clear that both Syria and Israel found themselves in the same boat, with their reluctance to see a leftist-PLO victory. The tacit agreement between Israel and Syria reached in 1976 regarding the 'rules of the game' in Lebanon became crystal clear.92 These rules were maintained, by and large, despite the fact that in 1977 Syria resumed its support for the PLO and turned against the Christian camp in order to counter Egypt-Israel detente. Within this framework, Syria, on its part, remained neutral at the time of the massive Israeli operation against the Palestinian forces in South Lebanon (Operation Litani) in March 1978.

91 Itmar Rabinovich, no. 88, pp. 185-86.
92 Efraim Karsh, no. 90, p. 140.
Syria's Anti-Arafat Move

After their evacuation from Lebanon in 1982, the PLO guerrillas reappeared in the scene in 1983 to put up resistance against Israeli occupation. As per the Syrian-Israeli modus vivendi, Syria plunged into action to undermine Yasser Arafat's leadership within the PLO. President Assad wanted to weaken the organisation and to make it subservient to his whims and wishes. By June 1983, the Syrian manoeuvring had produced an armed revolt against Arafat's authority by pro-Syrian elements within Al-Fatah under the leadership of Abu Musa with blessings from President Assad.

Despite the Syrian denial for the internal strife in Al-Fatah, it was evident that the rebellion in the Syrian-controlled Beka could not have taken place without the approval from Damascus.93 In the later part of 1983, Syrian involvement in the revolt was conclusively proved. Having driven pro-Arafat forces – the overwhelming majority in Al-fatah – out of the Beka valley to the Tripoli area, ultimately into the city itself, in mid-November Syrian-backed units laid siege to Tripoli; and a month later,

93 Ibid, p. 152.
a humiliating evacuation of PLO forces from Lebanon took place - the second that year, through this time from Tripoli rather than from Beirut, and under Syrian, rather than Israeli, pressure. 94 Abu Musa, who led the revolt against Arafat, had a very limited and negligible following; but it posed a major threat to Fatah because it was backed by regular Syrian forces. 95 It was the Syrian Army that fought the PLO forces as most of the Palestinian members of Al-Saiga had left the Syrian-backed guerilla group in 1976 itself and others during this time, and original PLA refused to open fire on the fedayeen. Syria's secret and surreptitious diplomacy with U.S. and Israel came to limelight.

Camp War

Having failed to dislodge Arafat from the PLO leadership, the pro-Syrian Amal Shia militia, with the blessings from Damascus, organised the Camp Wars against the Palestinians in Lebanon (1985-87). The Amal militia organised the siege of Palestinian

94 Ibid., pp. 152-53.
refugee camps and cut off the supply of water, electricity and food in order to starve the residents unto death. The camp dwellers started eating cats, rats and dogs to survive the ordeal. It was Tehran, and not Damascus, which successfully mediated a ceasefire agreement between the Amal and the PLO in late 1986 thus temporarily terminating the so-called 'Second Camps War' (the first had taken place in May 1985).

Indeed the Syrian and Israeli roles vis-a-vis the PLO have been complementary to each other. Syria has lost its credibility as far as the Palestine question is concerned. Moreover, Syria owes an explanation for the death of Al-Saiga leader Zuhair Mohsin who died mysteriously in Paris in the late 1970s. It is believed that Mohsin was a broken man after the Syrian aggression against the PLO in 1976. Al-Saiga, which numerically enjoyed the second position next only to Fatah in the late 1960s and early 1970s, was reduced to a minor organisation with a great deal of erosion in its stature. Arafat's worldwide popularity and the PLO's independent stature in the international politics seem to have clashed

97 Efraim Karsh, no. 90, p. 164.
with President Assad's egoistic display as a 'champion' of Palestinian cause and Arab nationalism. It is an unpalatable truth that Syria never allowed the Palestinian guerillas to operate from its territories against Israel. While Iraq, considered a rival by Syria, extended unstinted support to the PLO, President Assad's military oligarchy played a dubious role that hampered the Palestinian cause. Iraqi sponsored AlF fedayeen group never tried to sabotage the PLO, and played a constructive role. Iraq welcomed the PLO-Israel Accord whereas Syria opposed it as Assad was outsmarted by Arafat in international diplomacy. Damascus can at best harbour and encourage the PLO dissidents and other Palestinians opposed to the Accord.

The Fedayeen and Egypt

Egypt had taken the lead for setting up the PLO in 1964. the same year it also allowed the PLO radio, "Voice of Palestine", to broadcast its programme from Cairo. The Egyptian Government had curbed the activities of Haj Amin al-Husseini and Yasser Arafat after the 1956 Suez War. When Al-Fatah began to operate in 1965, pro-Egyptian Press branded
them either as the CENTO agents or as adventurists. 98
It was only after the battle of al-Karameh that
President Nasser began to support the fedayeen and
allowed Al-fatah to establish its radio, "Voice
of al-Assifa", in Cairo on 11 May 1968. Mohammed
Hassanein Heikal said in his editorial in Al-Ahram:

There is no doubt that the Israeli oppression
against Jordan has shown the extent of importance
and effectiveness of Arab Palestinian resistance
as a foundation stone for the liberation of
the Arab homeland.... This should prompt us
to provide commando activity with more support
because commando forces have shaken and fright­
ened Israel. 99

President Nasser invited three top Al-Fatah
leaders, Yaser Arafat, Abu Iyyad, and Faruq Qaddumi,
for a meeting. At the President's office the three
were subjected to security checking and were asked
to lay down their arms before entering Nasser's
room. Arafat was reported to have said: "My gun
is the symbol of the Palestinian revolution, I cannot
lay it down." Faruq Qaddumi said: "I am a political
man, and I don't carry arms." Abu Iyyad said firmly:
"My mother gave birth to twins - myself and the
gun." 100 However, Naser met them along with their
guns. The Palestinian guerilla leaders had their
inimitable style of guerilla diplomacy.

98 Al-Anwar (Beirut), 3 January 1965.
99 Al-Ahram, editorial, 23 March 1968, quoted in
The Arab World, 25 March 1968.
100 Fathi Abdul Hamid, the PLO representative in India, in
conversation with the author.
Rejection of Egyptian Diplomatic Moves

When Nasser accepted the Security Council Resolution (242) of 22 November 1967, and the U.S.-sponsored Rogers Plan in July 1970, the PDF openly criticised him. The PFLP and the PDF organised demonstrations in Amman against Nasser. Al-Fatah, however, criticised Nasser indirectly. It openly denounced the U.S. peace initiatives. "Voice of al-Assifa" broadcast songs, one of which said "Don't forsake me Lover" and the other song by a famous Egyptian singer, Mohammed Abdel Wahhab, said: "I did not sell you for gold, but you sold me for nothing." Al-Fatah radio had said: "No and one thousand times 'no'" to reject all peaceful solutions of the Palestine problem. "Voice of al-Assifa" and "Voice of Palestine" were muzzled by the Egyptian Government for making such criticism of the U.S. proposals. Al-Ahram clarified the Egyptian stand on 29 July 1970. It said that President Nasser was of the opinion that the fedayeen had the right to reject the U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 (or the Rogers Plan) since it was not enough to meet the demands of the Palestinian revolution, but it was sufficient for the elimination of the consequences of June 1967

101 The Arab World, 29 July 1970.
102 Ibid.
aggression. President Nasser differentiated between his acceptance of the resolution and the fedayeen stand. Fatah, which was speaking for the Central Committee of the fedayeen movement, said that the "minor contradiction" that had existed between the Palestinian revolution and certain Arab regimes might turn into a "basic contradiction" after those regimes had accepted the resolution and the U.S. Plan which would liquidate the fedayeen movement. The PFLP hijacked a Pan-Am Jumbo Jet to Cairo in September 1970 to foil the Egyptian diplomatic initiative.

Nasser as Peace Mediator

Egypt did not set up a fedayeen group but an Army commando group which was not widely used. Most of the raids on the Israeli military installations were carried out by the Egyptian Army units. The most that Nasser could do for the fedayeen was that he acted as a mediator when there were confrontations between the Army and the fedayeen in Jordan and Lebanon. Two major peace agreements were signed under his aegis: the Cairo agreement between the fedayeen and the Lebanese Government which was signed

103 Al-Ahram, 29 July 1970.
on 3 November 1969; and the Hussein-Arafat (Cairo) Agreement between the fedayeen and King Hussein on 25 September 1970. Being an elderly statesman he wielded influence over the Arab world and played a significant role in the inter-Arab diplomacy. Despite the erosion of his stature after the 1967 war, the fedayeen relied on him in their diplomacy with the frontline states, especially during the crisis.

Fedayeen Opposition to Sadat's Diplomacy

The fedayeen criticised the expulsion of Soviet experts from Egypt in July 1972. They accused Sadat of going "right". Al-Ahram favourably commented on the PFLP's suicide Squad operation at Lydda Airport on 30 May 1972, in which three Japanese revolutionaries participated and which resulted in the death of 26 Israelis including a top military scientist. It said that the participation of the Japanese in the operation gave the evidence that the fedayeen movement acquired an international dimension. 105

The Munich operation of the Black September Organisation was neither condemned nor praised by Heikal who said, "desperate men are bound to undertake desperate actions." 106

105 Al-Ahram, editorial, 1 June 1972, quoted in The Arab World, 1 June 1972.
106 Al-Ahram, 15 September 1972, quoted in The Arab World, 15 September 1972.
The students and workers of Egypt supported the Palestine struggle. They agitated and demanded the release of four members of the Black September group who had assassinated the Jordanian Premier, Wasfi Tal, and a war against Israel. The Egyptian Government was ultimately forced to release them. 107

Egyptian policy towards Palestinian cause during President Sadat's tenure was characterised by a change. Sadat emphasized more on the Egyptian affairs than on the Palestinian problem. Sadat's earlier adherence to Arab unity in the period following Nasser's death had, by 1972, become subordinate to the Egyptian interests. 108 Such a diplomacy was, indeed, a far cry from President Nasser's often repeated assertion that Egypt's responsibility was to the Arab nation and Palestinians as a whole.

President Sadat's policy was to give the "signal to left" but to "turn right". By 1972, Sadat moved closer to the United States through Saudi Arabia. 109

109 Mehmood Hussain, "The Soviet Experts had to go", in Mrityubodh (ed.) Rohle Ban (Den), August 1972, p. 5.
He actively promoted the talks on the phased Israeli withdrawal from Sinai through the U.S. mediation between 1971-72 but failed to gain diplomatic success. Egypt's ties with the PLO and the fedayeen organisations reached the lowest point during this period. \textsuperscript{110} Sadat's relative success in the 1973 war in which the PLO had collaborated with him did not permit him to regain the Arab position which Nasser had held in the past. \textsuperscript{111} In the post-1973 war period Egypt under Sadat rapidly moved towards a settlement with Israel. It began with the two agreements on troops - disengagement signed in 1974 and 1975, under the U.S. mediation. Replying to the Palestinian accusation that he had bandoned the Arab cause by signing the interim agreement with Israel Sadat asserted that his first responsibility was to Egypt. \textsuperscript{112} Abandoning the Palestine cause reduced Egypt from the leadership of the Arab World to the position of an Arab pariah.


\textsuperscript{111} For the Egyptian and Palestinian collaboration in the October 1973 war see Mehmood Hussain, no. 31.

\textsuperscript{112} Jagdish Prasad Sharma, "The Palestinians Since the 70s", \textit{The Indian Nation}, 18 April 1987.
The U.S. mediation between Egypt and Israel was later followed by the visit of President Sadat to Jerusalem from 19 to 21 November 1977, and his address to the Israeli Knesset. It was followed by the Sumit meeting in the U.S. in September 1978, and the Camp David Accords leading to the signing of the Egypt-Israel Peace treaty in March 1979. It reversed Egypt's earlier policy of commitment to Pan-Arabism and a total support for the Palestinians. Moreover, it undermined Egypt's role as a leader of the Arab World. All his diplomatic moves were opposed by the fedayeen who considered him a traitor who reversed the positive gains of the 1973 war.

Arab opposition to Sadat's visit to Israel was first raised in Egypt itself. Outside Egypt, Al-Fatah also condemned Sadat on 17 November 1977 for his visit. Al-Fatah issued a statement calling upon Sadat to forego that step as it would be a dangerous turning point and a gain for world Zionism and its imperialist allies headed by the U.S. Al-Fatah maintained that the visit would place the

Palestinian people and the PLO in a dangerous position in the face of an aggressive Israel which was too abdurate and intransigent; and was declaring that the people of Palestine had no rights, that there could be no independent Palestinian state and no total withdrawal from occupied Arab lands.

**PLO's Diplomacy to isolate Egypt**

Besides this, a meeting of the Syrian and Palestinian leaders — a brief rapprochement between the two to counter Sadat—resulted in a Syrian—Palestinian communique stating that the visit, along with the Sadat—Begin Plan, had no other aim but to impose a *fait accompli* on the Arab nation, and it invalidated all genuine efforts to achieve a just peace based upon total Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied territories and the safeguarding of the rights of the Palestinian Arab people to return, to self-determination and to establish an independent state.\(^\text{114}\) For the Palestinians in general and the PLO in particular, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem represented a grave threat to their liberation movement. In reaction to Sadat's visit, a conference was held in Libya under the aegis of Gadafi. It was attended by Syria, the PLO, South Yemen, Libya and Algeria.

The five states accused Sadat of attempting to create
"an alliance between the Zionist enemy and the present
Egyptian regime with the object of liquidating
the Arab and Palestinian cause, and fragmenting
the Arab nation." The Tripoli conference also
adopted sanctions against the Egyptian regime.
It was a genuine effort of the Libyan leader Gadafi
who had always been enthusiastic about the liberation
of Palestine. He helped the Palestinians financially;
militarily, politically and diplomatically. Gadafi,
after Nasser's sad demise, helped the fedayeen in
their diplomacy to form a block of some Arab states
to counter the U.S. - Israeli diplomatic moves
to liquidate the Palestine question or to sidetrack
it.

What Sadat did in going to Jerusalem was to
recognise Israel de-facto without getting anything
in return for the Palestinians. Therefore, Sadat's
visit to Jerusalem became his diplomatic waterloo
and his address to Israeli Knesset was like celebra-
tions at Arab graveyard.

115 Quoted in Ibid., p. 403.
PL0's rejection of Camp David Accords

The Camp David talks, which began on 5 September 1978 under the auspices of US, ended with the signing of documents on 17 September 1978 between Egypt and Israel. These documents contained: (1) A framework for the conclusion of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. (2) A framework for peace in the Middle East. The first of these documents contained the Egyptian-Israeli declaration of their intent to reach an agreement covering all aspects of the Middle East problem on the basis of the U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338. It called for an Israeli withdrawal from the Sinai peninsula. 116

It was an attempt to eliminate the consequences of the 1967 war only for Egypt. The second document envisioned a five-year period of autonomy for the Palestinians of West Bank and Gaza. An administrative body, or authority, would be elected. And at the end of the first three years, negotiations would begin over the question of eventual sovereignty. 117

But there was no mention of Palestinian self-determination, nor did Israel commit itself to eventual withdrawal. It aimed at the implementation of the

116 For details on Camp David accords, see Mohamed Ibrahim Kamel, The Camp David Accords - A Testimony (London: Boston, Sydney and Henley: KPI Ltd., 1986)
117 Ibid.
242 and 338 resolutions in a distorted form. How could there be Palestinian administrative body under the Israeli occupation; and without the recognition of the PLO?

The PLO outrightly rejected the Camp David Accords for several reasons. The most important reason for the PLO's rejection was that the Accords ignored the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people as confirmed by the 29th Session of UN General assembly in resolution no. 3236 of 22 November 1974. In fact, all the basic decisions relating to the procedures to be followed in seeking solution were made at Camp David in the absence of Palestinian representatives without any regard for the defined desires of the Palestinian people. The PLO's relations with Egypt did not improve till the assassination of Sadat, which was celebrated by the Palestinians. However, Egypt's rapprochement with the U.S. and Israel opened diplomatic possibilities explored by Arafat in the later years. Drawbacks of Sadat's diplomacy were: failure of getting the PLO into the peace process; and the time was not ripe for that kind of rapprochement with the U.S. and Israel.

118 In the wake of students unrest in Egypt before President Sadat's assassination this author made the prediction that he was going to be overthrown. Mehmood Hussain, "For whom the bell tolls", Tuesday (Bhubaneswar), 10 Swptember 1981, p. 8.
Arafat's Diplomatic Initiatives through Mubarak

However, President Hosni Mubarak seemed to be a more pragmatic and cautious leader than Sadat. He showed interest in returning to the Arab fold from which his predecessor had been excluded. He improved relations with other Arab countries, especially with the PLO. This was favourable for Yasser Arafat who was facing two adversaries - Israel and Syria at the same time. He succeeded in pressurising Mubarak for the inclusion of the PLO in Middle East Peace negotiations. Arafat's diplomacy had a bearing upon Mubarak who renewed his country's demand (like President Nasser's) for Palestinian self-rule and independence. He strongly criticised the United States and Israel for their action against PLO in Lebanon in 1982. He helped bring PLO leader Yasser Arafat together with King Hussein of Jordan to agree on a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation to attend any Peace Conference on the Palestine issue. Arafat showed olive branch to the U.S. and Israel through President Mubarak. Arafat also knew that his road to Washington goes via Cairo. PLO, on its part, helped diplomatically to get back Egypt into the mainstream of Arab politics.

119 Jagdish P. Sharma, "President Mubarak's role in Egypt". The Indian Nation, 20 April 1987.

In the post-Accord period the PLO - Israel negotiations went on and on under the aegis of Egypt. President Hosni Mubarak played a significant role in bridging the gap between the PLO and Israel for reaching the Interim Agreement on 4 May 1994. Acknowledging the Egyptian contribution Arafat said that 86,000 Egyptians laid down their lives for the Palestinian cause.