CHAPTER I
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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND: GENESIS OF THE WEST ASIAN CRISIS

During the First World War, the Allied Governments made several pledges for the recognition and establishment of Arab independence. Simultaneously, the British Government issued the Balfour Declaration on 2 November 1917 through which they promised a National Home for Jews in Palestine. League of Nations incorporated Balfour Declaration in the mandate over Palestine and on 24 July 1924, the administration of Palestine was handed over to the British Government. During the inter-war period the Arab and Jewish pressures on the mandatory government mounted for grant of independence. The British Government issued a White Paper to limit Jewish immigration to 75,000 over the next five years and to grant independence to Palestine after ten years. British proposals did not get favour from either Jews or Arabs and were violently opposed by

1 For the text of the pledges made to the Arabs, see George Antonious, The Arab Awakening (Philadelphia, 1939).

2 The Balfour Declaration stated that the British Government viewed "with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people...that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." For details of the text of the Declaration see Fred J. Khouri, The Arab Israeli Dilemma (Syracuse, 1963), pp. 360-61.

both. While the Jews wanted nothing less than an independent home, the Arabs opposed further Jewish entry in Palestine.

The Nazi oppression of the Jews resulted in increased Jewish immigration to Palestine. The US Government, because of the pressure of local Jewish business community, supported unlimited Jewish immigration to Palestine. The British Government was opposed to it, as it did not want to annoy local Arabs and hamper its war efforts. Finally the British Government agreed to the formation of an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in 1946. The Committee rejected the partition proposal and advised the British Government to retain the mandate, pending the execution of a trusteeship agreement under the United Nations. As the British Government was disinclined to act on these recommendations, another Anglo-American Commission was set up in July 1946 which recommended a scheme of federation having Jewish canton and an Arab one. The Jews as well as Arabs rejected the provincial autonomy plan.

The increase in the terrorist activities of the extremist Zionists and the pressure from the American Government forced the British mandatory power to refer the Palestine issue to the United Nations on 23 February 1947. On 15 May 1947, the UN General Assembly appointed the United Nations Special

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Commission on Palestine (UNSCOP) which submitted two plans, i.e. a majority plan and a minority plan in September 1947. On 23 November 1947, the General Assembly adopted a resolution for the partition of Palestine basically on the lines suggested by the majority report with some territorial modifications.\(^5\) The partition plan was approved by 33 votes to 13, with 10 abstentions.

The partition plan led to civil war in Palestine between local Arabs and Zionists.\(^6\) The British Government opposed any settlement unacceptable to any of the parties. It led to rethinking in the US official circles. On the initiative of Warren R. Austin, the US representative at the United Nations, a special session of the UN General Assembly was held from 16 April 1948 to consider United Nations taking over the Trusteeship of Palestine. While the General Assembly was still debating the Palestine issue, the mandate ended on 14 May 1948 and the British High Commissioner for Palestine left for Britain. On the same day, the Jewish National Council, proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel. Within minutes of its announcement, US President Harry S. Truman, extended recognition to the new born state of Israel. The Soviet Union

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also responded quickly in granting de jure recognition to the Jewish State.\(^7\)

**1948 Palestine War**

With the complete withdrawal of British units from Palestine, a full fledged war broke out between the Arab League states and the new born state of Israel.\(^8\) On 29 May 1948 the UN Security Council called upon the warring nations to observe ceasefire and entrusted the peace-keeping task to its mediator Count Folke Bernadotte and Truce Commission.\(^9\) Bernadotte's tentative proposals for the solution of the Palestine were rejected both by the Arabs and Jews and later on both the United States and the Soviet Union also rejected these.\(^10\) The Arab League announced the establishment of an "All Palestine Government" with headquarters in Gaza. On 20 September it was recognized by all Arab states except Trans-Jordan. It led to increasing Egyptian-Transjordanian rivalry which further encouraged Israel to ignore the efforts of the acting mediator, Ralph Bunche. In view of coming Presidential elections in US, Israel insisted on, either to obtain

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8 Arab League officially came into being in 1945 and it consisted of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq.

9 UN Doc. 5/795.

10 For the text of the proposals see A/643, 16 September 1948. Bernadotte was later assassinated on 17 September 1948 in Jerusalem by the Jewish terrorists. He suggested that (1) a special conciliation commission to help the Arabs and Israel arrive at a formal peace agreement be formed; (2)
favourable peace settlement or to increase her growing military power to seize more territory. Israel was sure of getting favourable American support because of the importance of Jewish votes in America. 11 Ralph Bunche's efforts led to a formal UN ceasefire on 7 January 1949 and signing of "Armistice Agreements" between Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, Transjordan and Syria leading to formation of 'Mixed Armistice Commissions' (MAC's) on 24 February, 23 March, 3 April, and 20 July 1949, respectively.

Aftermath of Palestine War

After the war, Israel was in possession of even that territory which was allocated to Palestinians by the UN partition resolution. Local Arabs were forced by the Jewish terrorists, to migrate in large numbers from the occupied territories, to the bordering states of Egypt (in Gaza Strip), Lebanon, Syria and Transjordan. It aggravated the political and economic situation in these Arab states. Israeli refusal to make any concession to the Arabs intensified Arab bitterness and the Arab started raising the slogan of 'another round' with Israel.

modification of partition boundaries; (3) the Arab section of Palestine to be annexed to Transjordan; (4) Jerusalem to be placed under UN control; and (5) the Arab refugees be allowed to return to their homes.

The Conciliation Commission for Palestine established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194(III) passed on 11 December 1948 consisting of the representatives of the United States, France and Turkey failed to bring Israel and Arabs together due to rigid stand of Israel on the refugee, territorial and Jerusalem questions. Arabs in turn announced economic boycott of Israel and refused to deal directly with Israel. The United States took the stand that the ultimate sovereignty over disputed areas was to be established by future peace treaties. Stray border clashes continued to occur along Israeli-Jordanian frontiers and along Gaza strip. Since relations between Arabs and Israel were not normal such minor clashes often had serious political repercussions. UN efforts to demarcate borders in more sensitive areas, appoint mixed border patrols, and set up local commander groups to quickly resolve minor disputes on the spot failed due to differences arising over the role to be played by the UN and over the type and level of contacts to be established.

Israel adopted a deliberate and official policy of retaliation. From 1951 onward its military personnel made

13 SCOR, yr. 4, mtg 433, pp. 76, 84.
the larger reprisal raids with advanced weapons. Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion was convinced that the Arabs "best understood sharp words and touch actions" and believed that by inflicting "two blows for one" the Arabs would be compelled to stop their hostile activities against Israel and would begin seriously considering making peace with Israel. 15 Israeli policy of continuing tensions with the Arabs helped her strengthening its national unity and at the same time it helped her get outside financial and political support for her survival.

Gaza Raid

Israeli air attack on Gaza on 23 February 1955 was aimed at demonstrating Israel's military superiority and exposing the Arab weakness to the West which was planning to organize Arabs into a regional defense system. It weakened the position of moderates in the Arab world and forced President Nasser to seek arms to strengthen Egypt's defense and made the chances of peace more remote than ever. 16 As Nasser was

15 Ben Gurion, "Israel's Security and her International Position", Israel Government Year Book, 1959/60, p. 17; Walter Eytan, The First Ten Years: A Diplomatic History of Israel (New York, 1953), pp. 99 ff; Moshe Dayan's speech to officer graduates, as quoted in B. L. M. Burns, Between Arab and Israel (London, 1962), p. 63; Israel thought that Arabs would be left with no alternative in view of the pressure put on them and will sue for peace as they had done by signing the armistice agreements in 1949. New York Times, 6 October 1955.

opposed to joining the American sponsored defence pacts, the West did not give arms to Egypt on favourable terms. He was left with no option except to turn to the Soviet bloc for help and successfully entered into an 'Arms deal' with Czechoslovakia. It strengthened Nasser's image in the Arab world but aroused deep concern of Israel, and the West became hostile to him. Initiation of commando training programme for the refugees settled in Gaza strip and their activities threatened the bordering villages and towns of Israel. The sealing of straits of Tiran by Egypt against passage of both ships and planes further aggravated the already tense situation on Israeli Egyptian borders. Israel regarded the Egyptian step as illegal and contrary to Armistice Agreements and the UN Charter. Egypt offered to remove restriction on Israeli navigation only if Israel agreed to abide by all prior UN resolutions.

Persisting differences between Syria and Israel over the use of Lake Tiberias and the demilitarized zone led to repeated armed clashes. Signing of a mutual defence treaty between Syria and Egypt on 20 October led to a major military


18 These conditions were repeated by Egyptian delegates in UN Security Council meetings. SCOR, mtg 550, 1 August 1954, pp. 3 ff; mtg. 661, 12 March 1954, pp. 21 ff; mtg. 696, 7 and 9 December 1954; mtg. 698, 13 January 1955, pp. 17 ff.
operation by Israel on Syrian borders on 1 December 1955. The main aim of the Israeli action was to prove that Egypt was not in a position to defend its Syrian ally. Israeli–Jordanian borders also witnessed retaliatory raids by Israeli forces to punish 'fedayeen' operating from Jordanian borders. Inclusion of hardliner Mrs Golda Meir as Foreign Minister in Israeli cabinet in the middle of 1956 led to more Israeli raids on Arab countries, which brought Israel and Arabs to the brink of war.

Nationalization of Suez Canal

In a 'deliberate undiplomatic manner' US Secretary of State Mr John Foster Dulles announced the sudden withdrawal of tentative US offer to help Egypt finance the Aswan Dam on 19 July 1956.19 Nasser retaliated by announcing the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company on 26 July. Britain and France, which controlled the Company, insisted on taking firm military action against Nasser.20 Pan Arabism, which was preached by Nasser, was regarded by Israel as threat to its very existence. The flow of communist arms to Egypt, the


military alliance of Egypt, Syria and Jordan and increasing fedayeen raids further added to Israel's worries. In Britain and France, Israel found willing partners to take military action against Egypt. International situation also favoured strong Israeli action as Soviet Union was preoccupied with the Hungarian problem and an uprising threatened Poland while President Eisenhower who was seeking re-election, was also not expected to annoy Jewish lobby by opposing Israeli venture. Thus Israel expected to face "minimum of resistance".

**Suez War and its Aftermath**

After being assured of the Anglo-French plan to invade Suez Canal, Israeli forces launched their attack against Egypt on 29 October 1956.\(^{21}\) As planned, the British and French Governments issued an ultimatum\(^{22}\) to the warring states and on its being rejected by Egypt, landed their forces at Port Said in order to seize the Suez Canal. The United States and the Soviet Union co-operated in the UN to help the General Assembly denounce this blatant aggression by Anglo-French-Israeli forces and call on the aggressors to withdraw their forces from Egyptian territory. Egypt agreed to the stationing of United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Gaza strip, along the

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\(^{21}\) *Noach Dayan, Diary of the Sinai Campaign* (New York, 1966), p. 3; *Thomas, n. 20, p. 89*. For Israeli intentions see pp. 1-19.

demarcation lines and in the key spots along the Gulf of Aqaba coast with the right to demand their withdrawal at any time.

The political results of the campaign were more significant than the military ones. Britain and France suffered a grave political setback in the region, and the Western influence in the region diminished almost to the vanishing point. The war gave an opportunity to the Soviet Union to pose as the friend of Arabs and the strong stand taken by America against the aggression restored some American prestige and influence in West Asia. The war seriously weakened the Baghdad Pact, solidified Arab nationalism and made Nasser a symbol of Arab resistance to Western domination and facilitated Soviet penetration of West Asia. Israel gained the freedom of navigation through the Straits of Tiran but the use of Suez Canal was still denied to her.

Presence of UNIF units along the demarcation lines prevented any clash between Israeli-Egyptian forces. Because of strong measures taken by Israel and Jordan, border incidents along their borders were avoided. But border tensions along Syrian-Israeli borders continued to exist and clashes flared up occasionally. Israel and Arabs, because of distrust for each other, were involved in the arms race and continued to get arms from Western and communist blocs. By 1960, Israeli


plans to divert waters of river Jordan to Negev led to Arab criticism as they feared that its completion would make Israel a 'much stronger power'. The Arab League Council claimed that Israeli undertaking was "an act of aggression" against the Arabs and it asked for collective defence effort on the part of the Arabs. On 17 April 1963, Egypt, Syria and Iraq entered into a tripartite pact with the declared goal of freeing Palestine from the Zionist danger. By late 1963, as Israel's project rapidly neared completion, rising Syrian pressures and popular concern over the situation forced the Arab governments to act. The Arab Chiefs of Staff in December 1963 supported Syria's call for the use of military power, if necessary to compel Israel to halt her water diversion efforts.

The Arab Summits

The first Arab summit was held in Cairo where Arab Heads of the States met from 13 January 1964 to 17 January 1964 to chalk out a common strategy to achieve it. The decisions

25 Hekhal's article in al-Ahram (Cairo), broadcast by Cairo Radio, 12 July 1963.

26 Arab News and Views (New York, Arab Information Office), 1 February 1964.


28 New York Times, 19 January 1964. The Arab leaders decided on a plan to divert the flow of those headwaters and tributaries (the Hasbani Banyas and Yarmouk Rivers) located in the Arab countries as it could substantially decrease the amount and greatly increase the salinity of the waters left in the Jordan River for Israel's use. They further decided to create a unified military command to protect
of the Arab summit came under heavy Israeli criticism and Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol termed these as unilateral and illegal and announced his government's intentions to protect vital interests of Israel.  

The second Arab summit of the Arab Heads of States, held in Alexandria in September 1964 again shelved the Syrian proposal of the military solution of the problem. It decided to form Palestine Army and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) to be trained in guerrilla warfare. While the Arab and Israeli water undertakings did not bring about a major military confrontation, the increasingly bitter water dispute intensified Arab-Israeli tensions and encouraged attacks by each side on the diversion projects of its opponents. But major border clash occurred on 13 November 1964 when Israeli airforce bombed and strafed Syrian roads, villages and military positions. In the Security Council, both Syria and Israel blamed each other of provoking the

the project from an Israeli attack; request all Arab governments to finance the Arab water diversion scheme; held military build-up in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, to continue efforts to set up a "Palestine entity".

29 Jerusalem Post, 22 January 1964.

30 Referring to Syrian demands of military action, Nasser in a speech to the Palestine National Congress in Cairo on 31 May 1965 said: "Israel may wish us to enter a war with it now....Is it conceivable that I should attack Israel while there are 50,000 Egyptian troops in Yemen?" Middle East Mirror (Beirut, Lebanon), vol. 17, no. 48.
incident. But Council failed to adopt any resolution on the incident due to Soviet veto on 21 December 1964.

United States and the West Asian Crisis

Prior to World War II, the United States considered West Asia as the sphere of interest of Great Britain and France. Therefore, it had no policy towards this region. Until 1930s, American activities were limited chiefly to those carried on by educators, missionaries and philanthropic groups. American oil companies acquired a stake in West Asian fields during 1930s. The United States became conscious of the strategic importance of West Asian ports and airfields which safeguarded Allied supply lines during the World War II. But she was content to play a subordinate role in the West Asian diplomatic and political affairs until after the Axis defeat. After the War, United States sought to check Soviet influence in the region with the co-operation of its Western allies and local Arabs. The international politics of oil made it imperative for the US to take an active role in the area. This led to American involvement in the Palestine problem.

The Zionists shifted the centre of their agitation for independent homeland for Jews in Palestine to the United

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31 For their respective views see the summary of debates in the UN Monthly Chronicle (New York), December 1964, pp. 3-6; January 1965, pp. 28-32.

States in 1930s. During and after the war, Zionist put intense pressure upon the American Congress, White House and the State Department and other governmental agencies. Britain's position on Palestine was ambiguous as she had issued contradictory promises to both the Arabs as well as Jews. The Roosevelt administration which was concerned about the plight of the European Jewry, issued contradictory promises to both Jews and Arabs. While supporting the idea of a Jewish National Home in Palestine, it assured the Arabs at the same time, that no decision regarding Palestine would be made "without full consultations with both the Arabs and Jews". President Truman also strongly sympathized with their demands and believed that opening Palestine to homeless Jewish refugees

33 In May 1942, American Zionist organization in a conference held at Baltimore Hotel in New York passed the famous Baltimore Resolution demanding "that Palestine be established as a Jewish Commonwealth....." Jewish Agency for Palestine, Book of Documents submitted to the General Assembly of the United Nations in May 1947. Ben Gurion, at that time, the chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency, noted: "Aside from the Yishuv (the Jewish Community in Palestine) itself, we had no more effective tool at our disposal than the American Jewish Communist and Zionist movement." Jewish Observer and Middle East Review (London), 31 January 1964.


would greatly alleviate the plight of European Jews. The British Government, however, was not prepared to assume the sole responsibility for taking such a drastic action and they proposed to set up a joint Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to investigate the social, economic and political conditions in Palestine to study the possibility of further Jewish immigration. The report of this committee and pro-Zionist policies of the United States Government aroused immense indignation and antagonized the Arab world.

United States and the Partition of Palestine

British Government, which was unable to resist the American pressure because of its war torn economy and unable to control terrorist activities of the Zionist and Arabs, referred the Palestine issue to the United Nations in February 1947. President Truman was already committed, in general, to the Zionist cause. Further five million strong American Jewish community constituted a formidable Zionist lobby in the US which no Government could politically afford to ignore. Finally the considerations of national interests yielded

36 Hull, n. 32, vol. 2, pp. 1531-2; Harry S. Truman, Memoirs: Years of Decisions (Garden City, N.Y., 1955), vol. 1, pp. 137-42. As a result of Zionist pressure, the American foreign policy began to reflect a deep concern for Zionist cause and under pressure from President Truman, the British Government agreed to admit one lakh Jews in Palestine. For the text of the Anglo-American Committee (January-April 1946), see New York Times, 1 May 1946.
to the dictates of domestic exigencies. Strong American stand in the close days of the debate on Palestine led to the passing of the partition resolution in the General Assembly on 29 November 1947. American diplomats were exceptionally active on behalf of the partition and used their influence to muster support for partition plan especially in Latin American countries. US diplomatic officials in the field and Britain strongly felt that acceptance of Zionist demands would precipitate a crisis in West Asia. The State Department and the military establishment now realized the force of Arab opposition far better than the White House, Congress and American public opinion as a whole and warned Truman of the

37 J.C. Hurewitz, Middle East Dilemmas : The Background of United States Policy (New York, 1953), p. 132; Kermit Roosevelt, n. 7, p. 1, observed that UN vote in favour of partition was secured by Zionist pressures and power politics; Thomas J. Hamilton in Foreign Policy (New York, 1948), p. 293, observes that President Truman's decision to support partition resulted from his desire to capture the Jewish votes in the New York city in the 1948 elections; Walter Millis, ed., The Forrestal Diaries (New York, 1951), p. 309, 323, 344, 349, 351 confirms this observation and points out that President Truman used his personal and official influence to secure a UN vote in favour of partition.

possible consequences of pursuing this policy.\footnote{39} Despite warnings to the contrary from the American diplomats and military experts and from the Arabs, Truman believed that partition was a "practicable solution" without "bloodshed".\footnote{40} Arab resentment against the United States was formidable and they blamed US as the moving force behind the partition plan.\footnote{41} In the Arab eyes, the United States personified the "new Western imperialism" that sought to establish an alien outpost in the Arab world. They charged that American money, arms and other aid had helped increase the size and strength of the Jewish community in Palestine to such an extent that an effective demand for independent Jewish National Home had finally become possible. In retaliation to the American policy

\footnote{39} Hull, n. 32, vol. 2, p. 1536. President Truman felt that officials were insensitive to sufferings of the Jews, Truman, n. 36, p. 69. The support to the partition plan was extended in spite of advice to contrary from the State Department, the Secretary of State, the Near Eastern Affairs Section and the Policy Planning Staff, George Kennan, Memoirs: 1923–1950 (Boston, 1967), p. 390; Forrestal, the then Secretary of Defense, described the US policy which was being determined by contributions from Jews to party funds, as most disastrous and regrettable; Forrestal Diaries, n. 37, p. 347; The State Department was joined in its opposition by the Department of Navy expressing serious concern over oil; and latter by Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff against sponsoring of a Jewish State as it was felt that no future war could be successfully fought without Arab oil. Ibid., p. 323.

\footnote{40} Truman, n. 36, p. 157. "The White House prevailed on all important occasions, and despite its tortuous ways American diplomacy could generally be described as pro-Israel". George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs (Ithaca, 1956), edn. 2, p. 390.

the Arab League Council threatened to withhold co-operation in the exploitation of oil concessions. In the face of Arab hostility, Britain refused to take the responsibility of enforcing the partition resolution. Due to the rise of Arab hostility and threats to interfere with the westward flow of oil, American officials felt concerned about the dangerous consequences to Western interests in the strategically important Arab world as implementation of partition resolution could require the employment of international force containing Soviet troops. On the orders of the State Department, Warren Austin, the US delegate to the United Nations proposed UN Trusteeship for Palestine on 19 March 1948. The Zionists were angered by the new American attitude which they considered as the betrayal of their cause. In the meantime, the British ended the mandate on 14 May 1948 and left Palestine. Within minutes of the announcement of the birth of the State of Israel President Truman extended recognition to it without consulting the State Department and informed the American delegate in the United Nations. In doing so President was carried away by popular emotions and partisan politics rather

42 GAOR, session 129, 23 February 1949, p. 1427.

43 Christopher Sykes, Cross Roads to Israel (London, 1965), p. 427, mentions that on 23 April 1948 President Truman sent word to Weizmann through Judge Samuel Rosenman, a mutual friend, that if Jewish State were to proclaim its independence following the end of the mandate, the US Government would immediately recognise it. On 13 May Weizmann wrote Truman that the State of Israel would be proclaimed the following day.
than a calm, informed appraisal of long-range national interests.

United States and the 1948 Palestine War

During the Palestine War, United States helped Israel in hard cash to purchase communist arms to fight the invasion of the Arabs. 44 The United States co-operated with the Soviet Union in the Security Council in calling for ceasefire. But President Truman, in spite of the advice to the contrary by the Secretary of State George Marshall, on 24 October, rejected the Bernadotte proposals. The United States prestige in the Arab world reached lowest as the Arabs blamed it for the creation of the state of Israel and their humiliating defeats.

After the emergence of Israel, two ideas dominated the American foreign policy makers in West Asia - namely containment of Soviet Union and the containment of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In order to contain the Arab-Israeli conflict, the United States along with the United Nations took up the task of the burden of refugees relief. 45 In spite of US help to rehabilitate refugees, the Arab refugees held


the US responsible for their plight on two counts—first for assisting Israel, which took away their property and second, for US failure to help them get their property back.\footnote{46}

The Armistice terms had greatly revised the UN partition plan to the disadvantage of the Arab states. In an attempt to prevent the violation of the armistice agreements, the United States alongside Britain and France issued the Tripartite Declaration in 1950.\footnote{47} The Tripartite Declaration arrayed the US alongside the colonial powers, Britain and France, in an arrangement to maintain the security of the Middle East. The Declaration warned both the sides against the renewal of hostilities and guaranteeing status quo. It aimed at prevention of an imbalance in armaments between the Arab states and Israel and the violation of armistice lines by force. To give an impression that West Asia was a Western monopoly, the Soviet Union was not invited to join the Declaration. As to the Arabs the Declaration seemed to favour continued American underwriting of Israeli military superiority; they showed pronounced hostility to it.

In 1950, the American efforts to forge military alliance (MEDO) for the containment of Soviet Union fell on deaf Egyptian and Syrian ears, though Iraq and Jordan showed

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\footnote{46} House of Representatives, Congress 84, session 2, Special Study Mission to the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific (Washington, D.C., 1956), p. 44.

\footnote{47} For text of Tripartite Declaration of 25 May 1950 see Department of State Bulletin (Washington, D.C.) 5 June 1950, p. 886. The text reads $V_1-0(W; 3, s) 194-9M(2M) \sim N^{67}$
their keen interest in it. Threats to the security of US stems from an anxiety that its rival, the USSR, might make inroads in the area which in turn may jeopardize the security of Europe by disrupting the "life line" of oil and block the West's communication network. But the Arabs feared Israel more than the communists. The main issues involved in Arab attitude against the West were: (i) its role in the creation of Israel, and (ii) its seeming support for British policies that followed the classic divide and rule principle.

In 1953, US Secretary of State, Dulles visited West Asia to examine the prospects of forging anti-Soviet arms alliance of the Arabs. But he found that Arabs were more concerned about the threat from Israel than about any threat from the Soviet Union.48 The United States started search for the settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute hoping that Arabs would be interested in joining Western defense pacts only if some satisfactory solution of the Arab-Israeli problem could be reached. Eisenhower's emissary, Eric Johnston, tried to encourage Syria, Lebanon and Israel to collaborate on a Jordan River development plan so that joint participation might integrate the economic interests of Israel and the surrounding Arab states. It could also help resolve refugee problem by providing more jobs to Arabs. Johnston's efforts failed because of the unwillingness of the

Arab states to accept Israel as a sovereign state. In order to woo Nasser, the United States started talks with him about the supply of military aid. Israeli raid of Gaza on February 1955 further led to mounting of tensions and intensification of American efforts to find some solution of the West Asian problem. Dulles' offer to provide American financial assistance for resettlement of refugees and guarantee of the borders of Israel was rejected by the Arabs as they wanted nothing less than the liquidation of Israel and were also opposed to the US scheme of a regional defense system. Israel also objected to any significant boundary changes and opposed refugee repatriation.

The Baghdad Pact

The Arab refusal to join the military pacts led to the creation of Northern tier defense chain that bound Britain, Iraq, Iran and Pakistan into an alliance system patterned on NATO model. The United States did not join the Baghdad Pact thinking that her participation would be interpreted as 'colonialism' but became associated informally with a number of

49 "The President's Proposal on the Middle East", Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations and the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate, 85th Congress, 14 January to 11 February 1957, p. 791, and also President Eisenhower's letter to Nasser, 15 July 1954.

Nasser opposed it as he regarded it as a threat to his leadership of the Arab world. He saw in it the Western attempts to build up Iraq as his rival. Israel was also alarmed since she felt that any arms aid earmarked for the Northern Tier countries would be ultimately turned against her. To expose Egypt's weakness and complicate the situation, Israel raided Gaza on 23 February 1955. Nasser retaliated by entering into an 'arms deal' with Communist bloc which willingly provided him with necessary arms on favourable terms. It further increased the Israeli fears which apprehended that new arms supplies to Arab countries from the United States and the Soviet Union would endanger her security. Due to opposition of Dulles to the arms race in the area, Israeli request for arms evoked only State Department's assurances that the matter was under study. In an attempt to offset communist influence over Nasser and restore waning Western influence in Egypt, Dulles advanced the proposal to guarantee Arab-Israeli border against any violation, but Nasser rejected it. In an effort to stop Nasser from going into the fold of the Soviet bloc, the US along with the World Bank offered to


finance the construction of Aswan High Dam to the tune of $4.5 billion. But Nasser's policy of spurning the Western powers and recognition of Communist China led to second thoughts in the United States and Dulles announced the withdrawal of the US offer to finance the Aswan project. Nasser retaliated by announcing the nationalization of the Suez Canal. Fearing that Britain and France were on the war path, Eisenhower sent a cable to British Prime Minister urging caution. He also sent the Deputy Secretary of State to London to convey his views personally. United States also opposed Anglo-French move to take the issue to the UN Security Council because of almost certain Soviet veto. US intended to devise a scheme which could be acceptable to Canal users as well as Egypt.

United States and the Suez Crisis

While the US efforts to evolve some amicable formula for solving the crisis were in progress and the issue was

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53 Senator William Fulbright, after a careful study of the records of the State Department on Aswan Dam Negotiations rejected the official reason concerning technical and financial difficulties and observed that American move represented a calculated step by Secretary Dulles to have a showdown with Nasser. Department of State, United States Policy in the Middle East (Washington, D.C., 1957), pp. 375-6; Sherman Adams, the then Special Assistant to President Eisenhower wrote that the US withdrew the offer of aid to Egypt under considerable pressure from Congress which was in turn pressurized by the pro-Israeli groups in the country. Sherman Adams, First Hand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration (New York, 1961), p. 249. For a detailed account of the episode see Herman Finer, Dulles Over Suez (London, 1964), pp. 20-60.
before United Nations, Israeli forces invaded Sinai and Britain and France also resorted to military action. The United States was greatly irritated by the Anglo-French and Israeli action as it did not fit in with her "long term objectives" in the region. The United States took initiative for an emergent session of the Security Council and after the Anglo-French veto, it took the issue to the General Assembly. The United States took the position that no matter what provocation had induced the Israeli-Anglo-French invasion against Egypt, diplomatic issues must not be settled by resort to military force. It co-operated with the Soviet Union in the United Nations in bringing about a ceasefire but rejected Soviet suggestion to take joint military action to stop the aggression. The US voted together with the Soviet Union for the General Assembly resolution which called for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of invading forces from Egypt. Israel also agreed to abide by the resolution after initial hesitation, because of

54 Emmet John Hughes, The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhowe Years (New York, 1963), p. 219. President Eisenhower is quoted as saying: "Are they going to dare us to defend the Tripartite Declaration?"

various threats and promises and the cease-fire came into force on 7 November.

Eisenhower Doctrine

Suez crisis saw the elimination of British and French power from the region and United States found itself in the new role as the custodian of Western interests. With the emergence of the United States as the chief guardian of Western interests, its policies were seen by Arabs as a new facet of Western imperialism. The Arabs laid the blame for precipitating the Suez crisis on American decision to withdraw Aswan Dam offer. Realizing that the Suez Crisis had seriously undermined the ability of the British and French to play a role in stabilizing in West Asia, President Eisenhower came out with his doctrine, thereby reasserting that United States still respected the Tripartite Declaration. The Joint Resolution approved by the Congress declared that —

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56 Dwight Eisenhower, Waging Peace: 1956-1961 (Garden City, 1965), pp. 183-5. Cutting of private aid to Israel, which amounted to about $110 million yearly, was contemplated, if Israel refused to withdraw her forces. US supported Israel's right to innocent passage in the Gulf of Aqaba and through the Straits and non-interference in the navigation in Suez Canal.

The United States regards as vital to the national interests and world peace the preservation of the independence and integrity of the nations of the Middle East. To this end, if the President determines the necessity, thereof, the United States is determined to use armed force to assist any such nation or group of nations requesting assistance against armed aggression from any country controlled by international communism.

The new doctrine was an extension of the Truman doctrine, to contain the Soviet Union and establish US dominant position there. The United States declared itself as the major peace-keeper in West Asia, not only against international communism but against other sources of instability as well. Nasser felt that the doctrine was aimed against him and he reacted with predictable hostility.\(^58\) The Eisenhower doctrine met with strong opposition from the Arab countries. It quickly persuaded Arab nationalists that it was an instrument of cold war pressure. Nasser's attempt to obtain aid from the West failed and he slowly edged into the orbit of Soviet influence in the economic sphere also.

During 1958, there was change in the State Department attitude towards Nasser and it started considering him to be the best guarantee against extension of Soviet influence in the area. Egypt's relations with the US improved further with the arrival of US wheat in 1960. The US tentative feelers towards

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\(^{58}\) Eisenhower, n. 56, pp. 115-16. On the decision after Suez crisis to try to build up King Saud as a counterweight to Nasser. Also see "Exchange of letters between President Gamal Abd Nasser and John F. Kennedy", Middle Eastern Affairs, vol. 13, November 1962, p. 273.
Egypt turned into a more coherent and full scale policy in 1961-63. As the total exclusion of Soviet Union from the region was not possible, the US initiated the policy of competition with the Soviet Union for Arab friendship. It also lifted the ban on the supply of arms to Israel and conservative Arab countries. To meet Arab hostility, President John F. Kennedy announced grant of substantial foodgrain to the UAR. Towards the Arab-Israeli problem, he maintained "an attitude of strict impartiality". To allay Israeli fears, he pledged preservation of status quo and called for an end to arms race. This change in American attitude related to technological developments that reduced the importance of forward bases and missile sites.

Kennedy expected to contain the West Asian crisis by concentrating on economic development of the area. Economic aid to Egypt was expected to bring moderation of Nasser's attitude towards Israel. He also attempted to solve refugee problem through Joseph E. Johnson, the special representative of the United Nations Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP) in August 1961 but his plan was rejected by Israel in 1962. To forestall Israeli development of the nuclear weapons,


the US offered to continue supply of conventional weapons.

**United States and the First Arab Summit**

The US feared that instability, uncertainty and insecurity in one West Asian country would spread to the whole region. Reacting to the Cairo Summit of 1964, Deputy Under Secretary U. Alexis Johnson declared that the US was committed to promote regional stability and co-operation amongst all West Asian states. He warned the West Asian nations that "any intended victim of any would be aggression, can count on our support". Declaring US neutrality in any regional dispute, he warned that US would not stand idly by if aggression was committed. The US, he further added, was pledged not only to take a hand in any Arab-Israeli conflict, but was also ready to defend one Arab State against another. 61 Reiterating President Kennedy’s statement of 8 May 1963, he reaffirmed US Administration’s policy to support security of both Israel and its neighbours, to oppose the use of force or the threat of force in West Asia, and to seek to limit the spread of communism in the region. 62 Reacting to it, UAR charged that the US could not play a negative role in West Asia since “Israel was born on the door step of the White House”. 63

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61 For text of address, see Department of State Bulletin, 10 February 1964, pp. 209-11.


63 The Egyptian Gazette, 12 February 1964.
During his official visit to the US in mid-April 1964, King Hussein of Jordan justified the decisions taken at the Arab Summit to divert the waters of the River Jordan. Reaffirming the Arab stand, he declared that Israel was a "real and ever present danger" to the survival of the Arab nation, and ruled out the possibility of any international compromise on the Arab-Israeli dispute over Israel's water plan. He also urged the US to take a "new look" at its West Asian policy.\(^64\) In reply President Johnson emphasized the "strong desire of the United States for friendly relations with all Arab States, and its devotion to peace in the area".\(^65\) But his hint at co-operation with Israel in using nuclear energy to turn salt water into fresh water offended the Arabs. His statement calling for using water as a force for peace, was taken to imply some Western sinister move by the Arabs. On 2 June, President Johnson reiterated to Prime Minister Eshkol, the US support for the territorial integrity and political independence of all countries in West Asia and emphasized the firm opposition of the US to aggression and the use of force or the threat of force against any country.\(^66\)

The United States was involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict because of its role in the creation of Israel. It was

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\(^64\) New York Times, 15 April 1964.

\(^65\) For Joint Communiqué of 15 April 1964 see Department of State Bulletin, 4 May 1964.

\(^66\) Department of State Bulletin, 22 June 1964, pp. 259-60.
instrumental in the adoption of the partition resolution by the United Nations. It immediately extended recognition to the newborn state of Israel and gave immense financial help to the new state during the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948. The US invited Egypt’s hostility because of its attempts to forge military pacts. Even after the positive role during Suez crisis, it failed to earn goodwill of progressive Arab states as these states looked upon the US as the guardian of Western interests in the region. Eisenhower doctrine earned the hostility of Nasser who regarded it as a threat to his leadership of the Arab world. With the change in US opinion about Nasser, an era of economic co-operation was evident for a brief period from 1960 to 1963. The Cairo summit in January 1964 and President Johnson assuming the office adversely affected the normalization of US-Egyptian relations.

**Soviet Union and the West Asian Crisis**

Soviet interest in Palestine had its roots in the past. Tsarist Russia had always shown concern for the holy places of Jerusalem. After October Revolution 1917, the Soviet Union continued to take interest in the politics of Palestine. The Palestine problem received little attention during the World War II, either in the Soviet Foreign Ministry or in the Soviet press. The Soviet government opposed the formation of Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in 1945, and declared that the United Nations was the proper forum for solving the problem.
of Jewish immigration.\textsuperscript{67} The Soviet Union took this stand because of its exclusion from the deliberations of the Committee.

The establishment of the Arab League in March 1945 was described by a Soviet commentator as the first stage in the Arab nations struggle towards independence.\textsuperscript{63} The Soviet Union turned the plan for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine as an American plan. Soviets denounced the Zionist approach on the ground that "it wanted the perpetuation of the foreign mandate".\textsuperscript{69} Soviet Union feared that partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab State would help Britain to consolidate its stronghold in the West Asia.\textsuperscript{70} The Communist International was opposed to Zionism as it diverted the attention of the Jewish workers from class war and the ultimate goal of a classless society to a limited aim of a Jewish state.

**Soviet Union and the Palestine Question**

After the Palestine problem was referred to the United Nations by the British mandatory power, the Soviet representative Andrei Gromyko on 14 May 1947 announced Soviet

\textsuperscript{67} K. Serezhin, "A Seat of Unrest in the Middle East", \textit{New Times} (Moscow), no. 1, 1945, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{63} K. Serezhin, "The Problem of the Arab East", ibid., no. 3, 1946, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., p. 16.

\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Izvestia}, 2 February 1947.
support for binational state in Palestine. The Soviet Union now favoured partition as it promised the prompt withdrawal of Britain from Palestine and offered the best means to increase Soviet influence in the region. With the change in Soviet stand, now the Soviet Union appeared to be on the Zionists side.

Stalin's Israel policy rested on the expectation that the Zionists, who are socialists, after all, would look more to the USSR for political and economic guidance. He could not ignore the fact that the Jews had played a tremendously vital role for socialism in the Bund (The Jewish labour movement in Europe at the turn of the century). For political and strategic reasons, therefore, it made sense for Stalin to pursue a pro-Israel policy even at the risk of antagonizing native Arabs. For the Zionists the change in earlier Soviet stand of opposition to partition of Palestine was a major victory. The Soviet delegate on 13 October made a major speech providing solid support for the concept of partition.\(^{71}\)

To counter Arab criticism of the change in Soviet policy towards the Palestine problem, the Soviet representative Gromyko, justified it in keeping with high principles and aims of the United Nations.\(^{72}\) The Soviet Union voted for the

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71 GARE, session 2, Ad hoc Committee, mtg 12, 13 October 1947, pp. 66 ff.

72 GARE, session 2, plen mtgs., mtg. 125, p. 1360. He expressed support for the Arab national movement and refused to say that decision to support partition was directed against Arabs. Soviet News (London), 1 January 1948.
partition resolution on 26 November 1947. As the United States had already extended de facto recognition to the new-born state of Israel, the Soviet Union countered by giving de jure recognition to it on 13 May 1948. Soviet spokesman emphasized that it was more significant than the de facto recognition accorded by the United States. Soviet theory about the war of independence was that it was a struggle against British imperialism and, therefore, it must be supported by all means.\(^73\) The Jewish movement in Palestine fulfilled an "objectively progressive" function for it helped to weaken Britain's position in West Asia. The Soviet Union also agreed to the request of the Foreign Minister, Moshe Sharett, to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.\(^74\)

**Soviet Union and the Palestine War of 1948**

Soviet Union strongly reacted to the invasion of Israel by the Arab League states. In the Security Council, Gromyko criticized the Arabs as the "lackeys of the imperialists"\(^75\) and wanted the Security Council to take strong action against the parties which were flouting the decisions of the

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74 The first Israeli Minister to Moscow, the Russian-born Mrs Golda Meyerson (later Mrs Golda Meir) arrived in Moscow in July, and the Soviet Minister to Tel-Aviv, Palvel Yershov, arrived in Israel in August 1948.

Council. Soviet press also launched a vigorous attack on the Arabs for their aggression against Israel. During the war, the Soviet Union supplied arms through Czechoslovakia for which Israel paid in US dollars, received from the Jewry of the United States. During the 1948 war, Israel thanked the Kremlin for arranging war planes and other weapons from Czechoslovakia which helped Israel to survive.

Soviet Union attempted to create a political presence in West Asia by giving political aid and arms to Israel as it felt that if invading Arab armies were not repulsed it might provide an excuse to Western powers to stage a comeback. Thus the Soviet Union enabled Israel to emerge as a State and survive the first challenge to its existence. The rousing reception by Soviet Jews to Mrs Golda Meyerson, the Israeli envoy, shocked the Soviet authorities and it adversely affected Moscow's attitude towards Israel. Moscow, now on, began to fear that the creation of Israel "would prove to be a cause of dangerous agitation by three million Russian Jews". It confirmed Soviet fears that Zionism created double allegiance - one to the native land and the other to the Zion (Israel).

With the intensification of the Cold War in West Asia, the Arab-Israeli conflict became part of the global rivalry between the two Super Powers. American economic aid to

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76 Pravda, 30 May 1948.
77 Kramner, n. 44, pp. 19-23.
78 Bar-Zohar, n. 73, p. 85.
Israel was regarded by the Soviet Union as a part of the imperialist plan to establish with Israel relations similar to those which had existed between Britain and its vassal, Trans-Jordan. Due to Israel's increasing economic dependence upon the United States, the Soviet Union charged for having become a spring-board for US imperialism and a base for Western military designs in West Asia. As Soviet Union was not allowed to play any part in the tripartite declaration of 1950, it denounced it as a threat to the vital interests and independence of West Asia. It led to deterioration of Soviet-Israeli relations and ultimately to Soviet decision to break her diplomatic relations with Israel. It in turn provided an opportunity to Israel to raise the Russian bogey in Washington for securing American help in economic sphere.

A new phase opened in Soviet foreign policy after Stalin's death in 1953. Soviet Union resumed diplomatic relations with Israel. The Soviet Minister to Israel presented his credentials to Moshe Sharret, the Israeli Foreign Minister in Jerusalem. Thus Soviet Union became the first country

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79 New Times (Moscow), 5 July 1950.
80 Ibid., 29 August 1951.
81 The Israeli-Soviet relations were embittered in November 1952 by the Slansky Trial; the expulsion of the Israeli Minister in Poland and Czechoslovakia; Doctor's plot in January 1953 and the bomb explosion in the Soviet Legation in Tel-Aviv in February 1953.
whose representative presented his credentials in the city of Jerusalem. By the end of 1954, Soviet security interests in West Asia brought it closer to neutralist Egypt and Syria, as Nasser was opposed to Western efforts to organize the region in a defense organization. Until 1954, the Soviet Union did not intervene directly in the West Asian affairs. The Russian engagement came with the American efforts to create a pro-Western security system in the so-called Northern Tier, which came into effect with the signing of Baghdad Pact in February 1955. The Soviet Union backed Pan-Arabism as a political force against the Western sponsored pact. It opened the way for a Soviet offensive against Western Powers. Soviet Union was critical of these Western efforts because of the location of these countries of West Asia in close proximity with her. Strategic bases there could threaten the very existence of industrialized areas of Ukraine and oil fields of Rumania and Caucasus. For the Soviet Union, it was a matter of life and death. Soviet Union lashed out at Western attempts and charged that MEDO was closely linked with their aggressive plans to encircle Soviet Union.

Israeli raid on Gaza in February 1955 made Egypt fully aware of its vulnerability and as America refused to supply her arms, she turned towards the Soviet Union and entered into a commercial deal with Czechoslovakia for purchase

of arms. It broke West's monopoly on the arms supply in the area. Russia's purpose coincided largely with Nasser's desire to undermine the Baghdad Pact. Moscow believed that Nasser would be able to organise "a counter-alliance in opposition to the Baghdad Pact" with the help of communist arms. The Soviet Union justified the arms deal as purely a commercial one. Arms deal established the Russian presence in the area and challenged the defense system that Western powers were setting up against its interests. The Syrian Government also decided to move towards the Soviet bloc in June 1955 to secure arms and financial credits. Israel also expressed its desire to enter into security pacts with the Western powers in a move to counter the Egyptian-Soviet arms deal, which it regarded as a threat to her security.

The Soviet-Egyptian arms deal became a turning point in West Asian politics and opened a new era of Arab-Soviet relationship. The arms deal not only opened the Russian penetration in the region but also upset the balance of military power between Egypt and Israel. It ushered an era

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84 Nasser started trying for Soviet arms in June 1955 when the arms deal was announced on 27 September 1955. *Sunday Times* (London), 6 November 1955. Russians agreed to supply arms through Czechoslovakia as opening supply of arms was bound to be taken as a deliberate breach of the spirit of the forthcoming Geneva summit. Czechs were therefore told to continue negotiations though the Russians supplied the arms that Egypt needed. See Mohammed Helikal, *Sunday Telegraph* (London), 12 September 1971.


86 Dagan, n. 82, p. 93.
of Soviet economic, military and political presence in West Asia. The shift in Soviet foreign policy came after the 20th Communist Party Congress in February 1955 when Moscow decided to support Arab nationalism vigorously.

The Soviet Union linked the war hysteria in Israel and Israeli retaliatory actions in Gaza sector in March-April 1956 as a pretext for the entry of Western powers in West Asia. Soviet leaders, Khrushchev and Bulganin, during their visit to Great Britain in April 1956, declared Soviet desire to be a party to an agreement among the four powers on the establishment of new order in the region. But the Western powers which wanted to exclude Soviet Union from any future peace settlement in the region rejected the Soviet idea.

Suez Crisis

Soviet Union while supporting Nasser's decision of the nationalization of Suez Canal called upon the Western powers to take the nationalization "in the spirit of the times". Soviet Union extended full support to Egypt in the first Suez Conference called by eighteen nations in London on 16 August 1956. Soviet Union stepped up the arms shipments to Egypt, and announced the departure of Soviet pilots for

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87 Izvestia (Moscow), 27 February 1956.
88 Jerusalem Post, 1 April 1956.
89 Pravda (Moscow), 27 July and 1 August 1956.
Egypt to take over from the Western pilots. In the Security Council, the Soviet Union condemned the Western pressures on Egypt and called upon the West to negotiate on the proposals of Nasser.\^90 \^ Soviet Union vetoed the Anglo-French resolution which called upon Egypt to accept eighteen-nation plan for an international authority to administer the Canal.\^91

In the Security Council, the Soviet Union denounced the Anglo-French-Israeli attack against Egypt. A resolution proposed by America and supported by the Soviet Union was passed in the General Assembly on 8 November 1956. The Soviet Union, after the US opposition to the invasion became clear, referred to the action of Anglo-French-Israeli forces as a part of the imperialist plot. When the war was on, Soviet Premier Bulganin addressed a personal letter to President Eisenhower asking for the collaboration of the American Mediterranean fleet with the Soviet navy and airforce to stop the aggression.\^92 In his messages to British Premier, Anthony Eden, and the French Premier, Guy Mollet, he raised the spectre of a Soviet strategic strike on the French and British homelands. His letter to Ben Gurion even challenged the existence of Israel which it felt had been jeopardised due to the

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90 SCOR, yr. 11, mtg. 736, pp. 14-27.
91 UN Doc. S/3675, 13 October 1956.
92 Pravda, 1 and 5 November 1956.
aggression. The Soviet Union even proposed to send its 
volunteers "to defend the freedom of the Egyptian people", and 
on 6 November, the Egyptian Government officially asked for 
Soviet volunteers. The same day the Soviet Foreign Minister 
Shepilov submitted a draft resolution in the Security Council 
which stated:

The Security Council...considers it necessary 
that all the United Nations member states, and 
primarily the United States and the U.S.S.R., 
as permanent members of the Security Council 
which have powerful air and naval force send 
armed and other assistance to the victims of 
aggression, the Egyptian Republic, by dispatch-
ing, naval and air forces, military units, 
volunteers, instructors, material and other 
aid....

The Soviet Union gave 12 hours ultimatum. It was 
only in terms of joint action with the US and other members of 
the UN that the Soviet Union wanted introduction of forces in 
West Asia. President Eisenhower categorically rejected Soviet

93 For the text of these letters see, Izvestia, 6 November 
1956. Regarding the credibility of Soviet threats see 
John Erickson, quoted in Calvocoressi, Peter, ed., 
Suez: Ten Years After (New York, 1967), p. 23; Anthony 
Eden, Full Circle (Boston, 1960), p. 621, "we considered 
that the threats...need not be taken literally".

94 Mohamed Heikal, The Cairo Documents (New York, 1973), 
p. 112. Syrian President Shukri al Kuwatly, who visited 
Moscow at the time of the Suez invasion, made an 
impassioned plea to the Soviet leaders for direct 
intervention. Soviet leaders referred to the impossibility 
of military intervention and suggested use of political 
means and action through the United Nations.

95 Izvestia, 6 November 1956.
proposal for sending forces in West Asia without a UN mandate. Fearing that Soviet Union may intervene, he advised the British Prime Minister to accept the UN ceasefire resolution "so as to deny Russia an opportunity to create trouble". Soviet Union called for unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces and favoured sanctions upon Israel to compel it to make a speedily withdrawal from occupied Egyptian territory. Soviet backing for Egypt prevented Israel from consolidating its military gains.

Aftermath of the Suez Crisis

The aftermath of the Suez crisis brought decisive gains to the Soviet Union. Throughout West Asia, Soviet performance was appreciated and the Soviet Union emerged as the recognised Middle Eastern power, playing the role of protector of Arab nationalism. Immediately after the Suez war, another Egyptian-Soviet arms deal was concluded that provided Cairo with weapons to replenish its wartime losses. The Suez crisis made the Western position precarious in West Asia. Britain and France suffered the greatest setbacks and forced direct involvement of the US in the region.

The announcement of the Eisenhower plan for the security of the region, provided an opportunity to Soviet Union for

96 Eisenhower, n. 56, pp. 91-92.
successful propaganda in the Arab world. Soviet Union created
an impression that this constituted a deadly threat to the whole
Arab world. On 11 February, the Soviet Union came out with a
peace plan. The Soviet proposal envisaged peaceful settlement
of controversial problems of the region, respect for sovereignty
and independence of the countries in the area, liquidation of
foreign military bases on their territory and renunciation of
all attempts to involve them in Great-Power military alliances.
This was an attempt by Soviet Union to get recognition of its
interests by Western powers, since they no longer enjoyed the
monopoly in that region after the Suez crisis. The United
States which was not willing to associate the Soviet Union in
any future peace arrangements in the area, rejected the Soviet
plan.100

The attempt by the United States to safeguard its
interests in West Asia aggravated the Cold War in the Arab East.
The Soviet Union now started regarding West Asia as the area of
primary importance both economically and politically and an area
of vital importance to the security of its Southern flank, and to
the peace and prosperity of Eastern Europe. Within a year after
the end of the Suez war, the Soviet Union granted a loan to
Egypt for the construction of the Assuan High Dam and economically

99 *New Times*, 21 February 1957. For the text of the proposals
see *News and Views from the Soviet Union* (New Delhi),
14 February 1957, pp. 2-4.

100 Department of State Bulletin, 1 April 1957, p. 523.
also Egypt came under the Soviet influence. Nasser got economic and military aid from the Soviet Union without subscribing to Soviet ideology.\footnote{For information on the dimensions and contents of the 1957–58 Soviet-Egyptian arms agreements see George Lenczowski, \textit{Soviet Advances in the Middle East} (Washington, D.C., 1972), pp. 146–9.}

Soviet military and economic aid started flowing in Syria, after the summer 1957, when pro-Nasser and pro-Soviet groups in Syrian army seized control of government there. Except for a brief period during 1958–59, when strains developed between Egypt and Soviet Union, over Nasser's action against local communists and his drive against Syrian communists, the Soviet-Egyptian relations continued to improve and the Soviet Union continued supporting the Arab stand against Israel.

\textbf{Soviet Union and the Jordan Water Issue}

On the Jordan Water issue, as on other Arab-Israeli issues, the Soviet attitude was favourable to the Arabs and hostile to Israel. Jordan Water issue first came in for mention in the Soviet press in January 1964. \textit{Pravda} called the Cairo Summit Conference "the most representative conference of Arab leaders in history".\footnote{\textit{Pravda}, 6 January 1964.} The Soviet Union contended that "the Cairo conference was called to oppose the Israeli plans with respect to the Jordan waters and intentions of the imperialist Powers, concealed behind these plans, of strengthening their foothold in the Arab East."\footnote{\textit{Pravda}, 26 January 1964.} The Soviet Union emphasized
that the Arabs could rely on Soviet support in their struggle against Israel. Soviet Union particularly noted the results of the Cairo summit with satisfaction as an armed conflict over Jordan River Waters was averted.

The Soviet Prime Minister, Nikita S. Khrushchev, while opening the completion of the first stage of Aswan High Dam, strongly endorsed the Arab stand against Israel's diversion of the Jordan river waters. Condening Israel as a "stooge of imperialists", he told applauding Egyptians that Israel had "robbed Arabs of their own resources of water". Further, describing Jordan river as an Arab river, he described Israeli designs as an example of "expansionist ambitions" and referred to Israel's scheme as an example of an "imperialist project".

Soviet Policy Towards Border Clashes

Soviet Union expressed its strong disapproval of Israeli policy of carrying on retaliatory raids against Arabs. It specially supported Syria in allowing militant activities of the Palestine Commandos against Israel. It extended its support to the Moroccan sponsored pro-Syrian resolution in the Security Council blaming Israel alone for the Israeli-Syrian clash of 13 November 1964 near river Dan. This resolution failed to get the required support in the Security Council.

104 Pravda, 10 May 1964.
Council. The Soviet Union vetoed the joint US-British resolution deplo-
ring the renewal of military activities and calling upon Israel and Syria both to exercise restraints.

Though the Soviet Union supported the UN Partition resolution in November 1947 for the creation of Israel and supplied arms during the first Arab-Israeli war, it opted for pro-Arab policy in retaliation to Western attempts to forge anti-Soviet military pacts. After Egypt's rejection of the Baghdad Pact in 1954, Soviet Union started openly siding with the Arabs in their struggle with Israel. During Suez crisis, it opposed the aggression of Egypt by Anglo-French and Israeli forces and played an important role in the UN and outside in getting the aggressors withdraw from Egyptian territory. Soviet influence in Egypt and Syria increased after their rejection of Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957 and Soviet willingness to help build Aswan High Dam. During this period the Soviet Union openly sided with the Arabs in their hostility towards Israel.

Concluding Observations

The super powers were involved in the Palestine problem after the World War II. It was the American economic pressure coupled with Zionist terrorist activities that forced the

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105 Resolution UN Doc. S/6085/Rev.1 was lost on 16 December 1964. The voting was 3 for, 0 against and 8 absent. The entire Western bloc abstained from voting.
British Government to refer the Palestine question to the United Nations. The passing of the Partition Resolution in the United Nations General Assembly was made possible by the support of the United States and Soviet Union, though both had different reasons to justify their actions. New born state of Israel was able to procure communist arms with American money during the 1948 Palestine War. The war ended with great military victory for Israel and she was in possession of more territories than what were allocated to her by the UN Partition Resolution. The war further alienated the Arabs from the West as they attributed their humiliating defeat to the West. The Arabs raised slogan of "another round" as they thought it to be the only way to regain their self-respect. The Arabs blamed both the super powers for their role in the creation and survival of the Jewish State of Israel.

As East Europe occupied a primary place in the Soviet foreign policy in the early fifties, she adopted neutral attitude towards the West Asian crisis. At the same time the United States policy had two major objectives, i.e. containment of communism and containment of the West Asian crisis. To deny Soviet presence in the area, the United States resorted to military pacts. The American efforts met with little success, as Arabs feared Israel more than the communists. To contain West Asian crisis, the United States came out with Tripartite Declaration which was criticized by the Arab States for its
being pro-Israel. American efforts to organise the Arabs into military pacts was opposed by Arab nationalists headed by Nasser. The Soviet criticism of Baghdad Pact and support of Nasser's idea of Pan-Arabism brought Soviet Union and Nasser together and it resulted into the signing of Egypt-Czech arms-deal in 1955. Soviet military supplies to Egypt, which were meant to deter Israeli and Western offensive action, in fact added to spur the invasion. Suez crisis forced Egypt to rely on Soviet Union for more arms. It started the arms race in the region which further complicated the West Asian crisis.

USA, on the contrary, alienated Nasser further by withdrawing the offer to finance the Aswan High Dam. The joint stand taken by the United States and the Soviet Union during the Suez crisis due to different objectives, forced the invading countries to withdraw from Egyptian territories without achieving any major gain. Egypt's defeat hastened premature movements towards Arab unions, intensified search for arms and invited Soviet penetration into Arab politics.

The post-Suez era saw the attempts of both the superpowers to fill up the vacuum created with the elimination of Britain and France from West Asia. The United States came out with Eisenhower Doctrine in 1957, but it failed in stressing upon the Arabs the dangers of communism. While the Soviet Union did not want another war, she fostered strife in the hope of undermining Western position and facilitating her own
penetration. Military preparedness went on, on an unprecedented scale in West Asia, as neither of the super powers were willing to impose a workable peace in the area. The super powers continued helping their clients in economic and military fields.

The West Asian crisis persisted and it deepened in 1963 with the Israeli attempts to develop Jordan River project. The Arab attempts to form joint strategy, during first Arab summit, increased Israeli fears. The Super Powers throughout this period kept supporting the opposite parties in West Asia. The parties to the dispute lost faith in the UN as the results of the Security Council debates could be foreseen by then. The Arabs as well as Israelis seemed to be heading towards another crisis.