CHAPTER-IV
World War I and American Response to Palestine Question:

World War I was a watershed in modern Middle Eastern history. It set in motion a chain of events that led to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and released forces of nationalism long brewing in the subject peoples who hoped to achieve independence. Contrary to the hopes of the subject peoples were the ambitions of the European Powers, which had sat at the bed side of the "Sick Man of Europe " waiting for his death that they might satisfy their imperial ambitions. War, nationalism, and imperialism drew the United States away from isolation to assume a role in Middle Eastern affairs. But this departure was only temporary, for the American people and Congress determined that the U.S. would not become enmeshed in the political affairs of the Middle East.

During the early years of World War I the United States adhered to the policy of non-intervention. American diplomatic representatives did not even attempt to dissuade Turkey from entering the war as the ally of Germany and Austria - Hungary. But the War strained American - Turkish relations. 1 Before the U.S. entered the European War,

officials in the State Department began to anticipate the
demise of the Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{2}

The outbreak of World War I precipitated the fall of
the Ottoman Empire. This long expected event caused the
United States to assume a larger role in the Middle East.
For a time it appeared as through President Woodrow Wilson
would have a larger voice in the Middle Eastern settlement,
but the U.S. senate thought otherwise and it pressured the
United States to return to the policy of non-intervention in
Middle Eastern affairs. In the aftermath of the war which
depleted American domestic reserves of oil, American
petroleum interests, with the support of the U.S.
government, engaged in the post war quest for the rich oil
resources that lay under the sands of Middle Eastern
countries.\textsuperscript{3}

The primary interest that concerned the U.S. in the
Middle East during the war was the protection of the
missionary institutions. At the beginning of the war, the

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., pp.29-31.
\item Thomas A. Bryson, \textit{American Diplomatic Relations With the
\end{enumerate}
missionaries faced a financial crisis. The missionaries not only counted on the services of Ambassador Morgenthay, but they could also rely on President Woodrow Wilson, whose administration restored the open door to pre-eminence in American-Middle Eastern relations and once again gave priority to the interests of the missionary.4 The influence of relief officials and missionaries of the policy making level increased during World War I.5

Wilson Era:

Wilson and Zionism: The Zionism issues also intruded into American foreign policy considerations. The World Zionist Organisation aspired to the creation of Jewish national home in Palestine. In 1914 there were some 20,000 Jews in the Zionist organisations in the United States, but with a total Jewish population of over 3,000,000, this was a small percentage. Zionism did not expand in the American Jewish community until after the outbreak of war. Notable converts to Zionisms were Louis Brandeis who became in 1916 a Supreme Court Justice, Judge Julian W. Mack, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, and Felix Frankfurter,6 also later to become an

4. Ibid., p. 59.
5. Ibid., p. 61.
Associate Justice of the Supreme Court. Brandeis became an ardent Zionist in 1912, and he cultivated Wilson's interest in the aspirations of World Zionism. Later Frankfurter and Rabbi Wise also exercised considerable influence on the American President. It was behind Wilson's leadership that the American diplomatic machinery responded to the plea of American Zionists for aid to the hard-pressed Jewish community in Palestine. American diplomats were the sole advocates for Jews in Palestine. Ambassador Morgenthau, an assimilationist, not sympathetic with Zionist goals, was their chief hope, and he responded to their call for help.

The initial Jewish problem centered round the fate of some 50,000 Russian Jews in Palestine. With Russia at war in Turkey, the Turks determined to expel these Jews. Morgenthau advised the State Department of their plight on 25 December 1914, and the U.S. Navy made the cruiser Tennesse available to lift some 6000 Jewish refugees to Alexandria. Most of the remaining Russian Jews agreed to accept naturalization as Ottoman subjects to avoid expulsion. To make matters worse

8. Ibid., p.120.
9. Ibid., p.123.
for the Jews, the commanding officer of the Tennesee filed a report that Turkish nationalists were determined to destroy the Zionist movement in Palestine. An official proclamation was issued to that effect in January 1915. The influence of Ambassador Morgenthau and the diplomatic agents of the Central Powers were responsible for Djemal Pasha's calling off Turkish persecutions of Jews by March. Further, American Jews proffered the economic aid to Palestinian Jews that made the difference between survival and extinction.¹⁰

The American Joint Distribution Committee, a Jewish philanthropic organisation, took care of the Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The State Department obtained the necessary permission from the Turks and from the British and the French for the dispatch of relief shipments to Palestinian Jew. In 1915 Zionists asked the State Department to use its good offices with the Turks and the Allies to permit shipments of petroleum so necessary for the operation of irrigation pumps in the orange groves. The British and French refused saying the Turks might confiscate the fuel for their war effort.¹¹

¹¹. Ibid., pp.142-144.
But U.S. government officials aided the Palestinian Jews in other ways. Ambassador Morgenthau facilitated the transfer of money to them when the war brought a halt to the normal movement of funds. The State and Navy Departments aided the channeling of medical supplies and food.\textsuperscript{12}

Thus prior to American entry into World War I, the Protestant missionary lobby and American Zionists had exerted sufficient pressure on official government circles to obtain a more active American role in Middle Eastern affairs. But the high points of Protestant and Zionist utilization of political pressure came after the U.S. declared war on Germany in April 1917. Although in his annual message to Congress in December 1917 Wilson urged a declaration of War on Austria, he elected not to ask for a declaration on Turkey, even though British, French, and Italian officials would have welcomed such a move.\textsuperscript{13}

Why did Wilson omit Turkey? It seems that he was primarily motivated by two considerations. First, American military advisers opposed entry into the conflict in the

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp.144-146.

Middle East because it would drain off forces needed on the Western front. Wilson also considered the arguments of the Protestant lobby, which claimed that war with Turkey would end all relief efforts and cause the closing of missionary institutions. It is safe to assume that consideration of a humanitarian and strategic nature dictated Wilson's decision.

Zionist influence on Wilson was important as demonstrated by the abortive 1917 Morgenthau mission to seek a separate peace treaty with Turkey and by President Wilson's consent to endorse a Jewish national home in Palestine.

The former ambassador to Turkey suggested to Secretary of State Lansing in May 1917 that he believed Turkey wanted a separate peace. Such a move would on the surface at least, benefit hard-pressed Palestinian Jews. Morgenthau's idea was broached to Wilson who was interested. The State Department arranged for Morgenthau to travel to Switzerland to contact Turkish diplomats. But American Zionists opposed

14. Evans, n.1., p.42.
16. Ibid., p.63.
this move. Justice Brandies know of its purpose, and he advised Dr. Chaim Weizmann, the leading Zionist in Britain, who promptly told British Foreign Secretary Arthur J. Balfour. The two agreed that the Morgenthau mission should be scotched, for an anticipated British offensive against the Turks in Palestine would do for more to assure the future of a Jewish national home.

Brandies arranged for Felix Frankfurter to accompany Morgenthau to ascertain that the latter would not make an agreement compromising the Zionist goal. Acting through Balfour, the Zionists arranged for Morgenthau and Frankfurter to meet Dr. Weizmann at Gibraltar where he deterred Morgenthau from his task.17

Wilson, Brandies and Balfour Declaration: During the months just before Balfour Declaration was issued (November 2, 1917). President Woodrow Wilson of the United States was under great pressure to join with Britain in enunciating the policy of a Jewish national home in Palestine. The American

government had previously had no political experience and knew next to nothing about the conflict of interests that was building up between Britain and France, the two powers and the Arabs, and the Palestinians and the Zionists the focal point of which became Palestine. 18

The beginning of the United States Government's involvement in Palestinian affairs had came in 1914, when war broke out between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire, and the Palestinian Jewish community applied to American consular agents for protection. President Wilson's interest in Zionism was nurtured by the men who surrounded him, particularly Supreme Court Justice, Louis Brandies. 19

President Wilson was mightily attracted by the idea of becoming the protector of minorities and persecuted peoples abroad including the Jewish community in Palestine. "His advisers interested in the crasser political dividends, publicised the President's interest in the welfare of Jews living in Palestine, counting Jewish votes in the 1916

19. Ibid.
elections and introducing vote-getting in American elections into United States' consideration of Palestine policy.  

However, President Wilson hesitated to commit the United States to the Balfour Declaration as he apprehensive of participating in the predetermination of the future of a country with which the United States was not at war.

In January 8, 1918, President Wilson delivered his famous address in which he set forth his "Fourteen Points" and the terms of the peace settlement with the Ottoman Empire. Point 12 was specifically designed to prevent European Powers from seizing and "exploiting" the former peoples and territories of the Empire. It states:

The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but nother nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.  

20. Ibid.

Finally, on August 31, 1918 the American Zionists increasingly anxious about the President's policies towards the 'other nationalities' in former Ottoman domains were able to secure Wilson's guarded approval of the Balfour Declaration to a letter from Rabbi Stephen Wise, the President expressed his "satisfaction" over the growth of the Zionists movement in the United States and over the policy of a Jewish national home in Palestine enunciated by the British government in the Balfour Declaration. When Wilson embarked on his efforts to negotiate a just and humane peace after the war, he had certain predispositions towards a Zionist Palestine, but the shape American policy would take as a result of his preference had not yet been determined.

Then on September 21, 1918 the Secretary of State, Robert Lansing, in a memorandum prepared for the American delegation to the Peace Conference, suggested that the Arabs should receive full or partial sovereignty over whatever state or states they might establish but that Palestine should be put under a protectorate or a mandate —

Palestine was obviously not to be included in any independent or partially independent Arab area. The destiny of Palestine was reserved. 23

Louis Brandies: Almost immediately after the outbreak of war, the Federation of American Zionists called an extraordinary conference to consider the prevailing situation. The Conference met in New York on 30 August 1914 and resulted in the setting up of an adhoc body under the name of 'The Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs”, with Brandies as Chairman. The Provisional Committee, towards the end of 1914 suggested to the Zionist executive in Berlin that the headquarters of the Organisation should be transferred to the Unites States. 24

The Committee succeeded in kindling the imagination of the Jewish masses, but it also attracted from a very different milieu supporters of the quality and standing of men like Felix Frankfurter who later on become Justice Frankfurter of the U.S. Supreme Court and Julian W. Mack, a judge of the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. This hastily improvised body could never have accomplished what it did

23. Ibid.
without outstanding leadership. It was to its immeasurable advantage that it had for its first chairman so commanding a personality like Brandeis. 25

As Chairman of the Provisional Executive Committee Brandeis, committed himself for the first time to an active part in Jewish affairs.

He told Balfour at their interview in 1919 that until he became interested in Zionism his whole life 'had been free from Jewish contacts and traditions. In a conversation with Felix Frankfurter, Brandeis elaborated that he had first become interested in Zionism when, "as an American, he was confronted with the vast disposition of the vast number of Jews, particularly Russian Jews, that were pouring into the United States". 26 A Zionist pamphlet which he came across infused in him the interest for the study of the Jewish problem and to the conviction that Zionism was the answer.

Brandeis told Balfour that he had come to Zionism, 'wholly as an American. 27 This theme he repeated again and

25. Ibid., pp.191-192.
27. Stein, n.24, p.192.
again in his wartime speeches as Chairman of the Provisional Committee. Some of them are in queer contract to his views that he upheld earlier in his career. He said in an address delivered in 1905:

There is room here for men of any race, of any creed, of any condition in life, not enter for Protestant Americans or Catholic Americans or Jewish Americans nor for German Americans or Russian Americans .... Habits of living or thought which tend to keep alive difference of origin, or to classify men according to their religious beliefs are inconsistent with American ideals of brotherhood and are disloyal.\textsuperscript{28}

He spoke the opposite ten years later:

Every Irish American who contributed to advancing Home Rule was a better man and a better American for the sacrifice involved. Every American Jew who aids in advancing the Jewish settlement of Palestine ......... will likewise be a better man and a better American for doing so.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{28} Mason, n.26, p.442.

\textsuperscript{29} Stein, n.24, p.193.
Brandies emphasized on this theme in his many other wartime speeches. "My approach to Zionism was through Americanism .... Gradually it became clear to me that to be good Americans we must be better Jews, and to be better Jews we must become Zionists." Loyalty to America demands ...... that each American Jew become a Zionist. For only through the ennobling effects of its stirrings can we develop the best that is in us and give to this country the full benefit of our great inheritance." The Jewish renaissance in Palestine will help us to make towards the attainment of American ideals of democracy and social justice that large contribution for which religion and life are peculiarly fitted the Jew. Let no one of you if he be a true American, shirk his duty. "

In politics Brandeis had started as a Republican, but he had broken away from his party and, after veering towards. Progressive Republicanism, had eventually come down on the Democratic side as a supporter of Woodrow Wilson in the Presidential campaign up 1912.31 He was recognized as an important recruit and was considered for office when the tie

came for President Wilson to select his first cabinet.\textsuperscript{32} Faced with strong opposition from various quarters some of it from the moneyed interest and some of it of an anti-semitic hue Wilson decided at the last moment to drop Brandeis, from his list.\textsuperscript{33} Brandeis never held political office, but his association with Wilson developed into a relationship, which gave him an influential position as one of the President's most highly esteemed unofficial advisors.\textsuperscript{34} In 1916, Wilson, having nominated Brandeis to fill a vacancy in the supreme court, encountered some opposition in the Senate.

He wrote in support of the appointment:

\begin{quote}
I have known him. I have tested him by seeking his advice upon some of the most difficult and perplexing public questions about which it was necessary for me to form a judgement. I have received from his counsel, singularly enlightened, singularly clear sighted and judicial and above all, full of moral stimulation...\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., See also A.S. Link, \textit{Wilson, The New Freedom} (Princeton, 1956), pp.10 -134.

\textsuperscript{33} Mason., p.387.

\textsuperscript{34} A.S. Link, n.32, p.95.

\textsuperscript{35} Mason, n.24, p.192.
That Brandeis stood high in Wilson's confidence and esteem, was a common knowledge. The prestige of his name, enhanced by his close relations with the President, was an asset of which full use was made by the Zionist leaders, in London, in their dealings with the British government. His reputation as one of the Wilson's most trusted advisers materially influenced the course of events in so far as it improved the standing of the Zionists and gave them added claim to attention.

Strange as it may appear, though it seems clear that when, early in September 1917 Wilson was first sounded by the British Was Cabinet as to his views on a pro-Zionist pronouncement, he looked for advice, not to Brandies, but to his still more intimate confidant, Colonal House. After consultation with Colonal House, he sent a discouraging reply to which Brandeis cannot possibly have been a party. On the other hand, there is reason to believe that Brandies had something to do with Wilson's second thoughts when a further enquiry on the same subject reached Washington from London a few weeks later. This time Wilson let it be known,

37. Ibid., p.19.
through House that he would favour the proposed British declaration.\(^{38}\)

It seems to have been House who finally persuaded him to assent, but in the interval between the two British enquiries Brandeis had intervened to some purpose, though it looks as though his influence had been exerted through House rather than by a personal approach to the President.\(^{39}\)

Chaim Weizmann and his London colleagues had hoped that Brandeis would be able to induce Wilson actively to press their case on the British government. This did not happen, but in so far as Brandeis helped to swing Wilson from discouragement to approval of a British assurance to the Zionists, he rendered a signal service to the Zionist cause. Wilson's September message had come near to killing the Balfour Declaration. Had his reply to the second British enquiry been equally chilling, it is quite possible the Declaration would have never seen the light.\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp.196-97.

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., p.197.
On November 2, 1917, came the well known Balfour Declaration, promising the World Zionists a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine. This, incidentally, was the first occasion on which the United States—already involved in the war since April 6, 1917 became involved in the political affairs of the Arabs.41

According to William Yale,42 President Wilson's agreement to the Declaration came during Lord Balfour's visit for one month to the United States starting April 22, 1917. Lord Balfour at that time met Justice Louis Brandeis who was then a leading figure in the American Zionist movement, and a trusted advisor to President Wilson. Brandeis had already won the sympathy of President Wilson to the Zionist cause, and assured Lord Balfour that the President was actively sympathetic to a Jewish home in Palestine.

Therefore, when the Balfour Declaration was issued in the form of a note from Lord Balfour to Lord Rothschild a


42. Captain Yale was a member of the American King Crane Commission sent by President Wilson in 1919 to investigate the wishes of the Syrian people as to the final political settlement in Syria.
leading English Zionist - on November 2, 1917, it had the 
approval of the British Cabinet as well as the approval of 
the President of the United States. Yet Wilson insisted 
upon adding upon adding the modifying clauses to the 
declaration before he accepted it.43 The President later 
publicity acknowledged the Balfour Declaration of in a 
letter addressed to Rabbi Stephen S. Wise.44

The carefully prepared text, known as the Balfour 
Declaration, set the stage for more than thirty years of 
conflict among Arabs, Jews, and British troops in Palestine. 
There is no evidence that Wilson saw the final version of 
the statement before it was communicated to lord Rothschild. 
What is clear is that the preoccupied wartime President, did 
not consider the affair of particular concern to U.S.45

Wilson’s attitude typified the American approach to 
Palestine for the next two and half decades. While sympathy 
for the Zionist movement was occasionally expressed by 
policy makers, Palestine was seen as a British

responsibility and care was taken to avoid any official commitment to the creation of a Jewish national home in that county. 46

Wilson and Paris Peace Conference: In 1918, Wilson showed his interest in the future of the Arabs in the form of the famous 'Fourteen Points'. Point twelve indirectly refers to the Arabs, as well as to other minorities in the Ottoman Empire.

It states:

"The Turkish portions of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured an undoubted security life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity of autonomous development". 47

President Wilson's idealism, as illustrated in this point and his self determination policy expounded in Point Five, seem to be in consistent with his acceptance of the

46. Early sympathetic, but non-committal, pronouncement on Zionism by American foreign foreign policy makers can be found in Reuben Fink, ed., America and Palestine (New York, American Zionist Emergency Council, 1944).

Balfour Declaration as modified. To Arab leaders like Prince Faisal, the son of Sherif Hussain and the Chief spokesman for the Arab cause in the Paris Peace Conference Wilson’s twelfth point was interpreted later to foreshadow and nullify the Balfour Declaration and all the Allied secret agreements during the war. For a policy of self determination would of once block the Zionist aims in Palestine, as well as the imperial powers ambitions in the area. The Jews in Palestine then constituted at best not more than 10 per cent of the population and a policy of counting heads would favour Palestines inclusion in an Arab state as pledged to Sherif Hussain of Mecca by the High Commissioner of Egypt, Henry McMahon, in 1916. Therefore, neither the Zionists nor ...e representative of Great Britain were later happy with the expression’s of Wilson’s idealism. "Had it been pushed to its logical conclusion, the President’s program would have conflicted with practically every one of the secret agreements with the exception perhaps, of the British Arab accord."48 Wilson’s numerous remarks in which he warned against the disposing off the

Middle East among the great powers did not get a favourable reception among the Allies.\textsuperscript{49}

At the Paris Peace Conference, Prince Faisal met with three major forces at work in opposition to Arab aspirations. The British, the French, and the World Zionists. Only in President Wilson he found a sympathetic listener. Wilson opposed annexation saying this would discredit the proposed League of Nations. At length, Prime Minister Jan Smuts of South Africa produced the Mandate concept, a compromise between imperial annexation and Wilsonian self determination. The proposal was accepted.\textsuperscript{50}

There were claims and counter claims. The subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire were anxious to have their day, and during the month of February they presented their cases. On 6th February Prince Faisal asked for the creation of Arab confederation. Zionists urged that the Balfour Declaration be carried out, with Britain acting as Mandatory.


\textsuperscript{50} Bryson, n.3, p.65.
King Crane Commission: With such a situation the conference reached an impasse. At that point a letter from President Howard Bliss of the American University of Beirut suggested to President Wilson the possibility of sending a commission of inquiry to Syria to determine the wishes of the people.51 This suggestion was harmonious with Wilson's concept of self determination, and, at the President's insistence, the Supreme Allied Council agreed on 20 March to send such a commission to Syria. In fact Wilson insisted on such a commission, and despite intense Zionist objections voiced by Professor Felix Frankfurter, and British and French refusal to participate in such a commission. Initially known as the Inter - Allied Commission on Mandate in Turkey, the fact finding body ultimately became an American venture because the British and French elected not to participate. The President appointed Dr. Henry C. King, President of Oberlin College, and Charles R. Crane of New York a prominent business man. other members of the commission were Professor Albert H. Lybyer, Dr. George R. Montgomery, Captain William Yale and Captain Donald M. Broodie.52 Between May and July,

52. Abu Jaber, n.41, p.5.
1919, the King-Crane Commission made a six weeks tour of Syria and Palestine, held hearings and on August 28, 1919, presented their report to the President.53

The King-Crane report testified to the high regard the Arabs of Syria and Palestine had for President Wilson and the United States. According to the report, the Commission found the inhabitants of Syria and Palestine insistent on an independent and united Arab state, and recommended that Prince Faisal be made head of such a united Syrian state. Failing to achieve complete independence, the great majority of the Syrians were found to favour the United States coming in as a mandatory power rather than any other power.54

The recommendation of the Commission's report were not followed and in fact were not even discussed by the Paris Peace Conference. "It was simply buried in the archives of the American delegation, and ignored by the conferees. It was not published until 1922, long after the peace settlement."55

53. See Henry Harry N. Howard, n.51 for full text of the recommendations of the King-Crane Commission is found in Antonius, Appendix II, pp.443-458.

54. Abu Jaber, n.41, p.6.

55. Lenczowski, n.44, p.92.
This neglect of the Commission’s report is attributed to President Wilson’s failure to convince the American Senate of the soundness of the Versailles Treaty, as is well known, affected the whole general question of America’s involvement in world affairs between the two World War. Wilson never saw the report. In Wilson’s absence from Paris, the Commission’s report was simply not pressed by the rest of the American delegation and was ignored by the major powers, who proceeded later in the San Remo Conference of April 24, 1920 to divide greater Syria into French and British mandates. As these mandates were allocated, the United States on August 24, 1921, made clear in an “Open Door Policy” statement that she expected her interests and the “fair and equal opportunities which it is believed the United States should enjoy in common with the other powers” to be safeguarded. 56

The U.S. And Palestine Till 1939:

Following the award of the Palestine mandate to Great Britain in 1920, Congress passed a resolution endorsing the Balfour Declaration. the sponsor of the resolution in the

House of Representation was at point out that passage of the measure would involve no commitment to an "entangling alliance or to any obligation to use military or naval force or the expenditure of any money." The legislation was described as "merely a expression of sympathy and favourable attitude in establishing in Palestine a refuge for the prosecuted Jews of the World".  

U.S.A. was not a member of the League of Nations, but it secured "most favoured nation" status in Palestine by concluding a convention with Great Britain in 1924. Under this agreement the United States recognized the legality of the British administration in Palestine and in return was guaranteed equal treatment with members of the League of Nations in matters pertaining to that country. After being disillusioned with Britain that it would not "secure the establishment of a Jewish national home" the Zionists in American argued that the Anglo-American Convention empowered Washington to veto administrative measures in Palestine that


it considered violations of the original League of Nations directive. This point of view was never accepted by the British or American governments. A public memorandum issued by the Department of State in 1938 sought to clarify Washington's view that it had no right to prevent changes in the terms of the Palestine mandate. Shortly afterward, President Roosevelt made the same point in a letter to the Mayor of Hartford, Connecticut.

American aloofness from Palestine during the interwar period was a product of a generally low level of involvement with the Middle East as a whole. Historically, sustained American contact with the region was imbued with Christian missionary fervour, to convert the Islamic peoples to Christianity. However after World War I, Washington helped open the way for the development of private American commercial interests in the Middle East. Although economic relations of American with the countries of the region remained minimally important, the policy makers were anxious that Americans not suffer economic discrimination.


60. Frank E. Manuel, n.7, p.307.
The conventions between the mandatory powers in the Middle East and the United States were designed to ensure this.\textsuperscript{61}

Noted result of Washington's preoccupation with commercial rights was American participation in the hunt for Middle East oil. Despite the successful introduction of an American presence into the Middle East oil industry, Washington continued to show little desire to enhance its political influence in the area. On account of this the overhaul American trade with the region remained modest in the years before world war II.

Notwithstanding the government's preference for non-involvement in the Middle Eastern affairs, circumstances soon conspired to give the United States an important role in the political life of the region. One such factor was the radical alteration in relations between the Zionist movement and the British government that occurred in the spring of 1939. Feeling themselves forsaken by London, Zionist leaders looked to the large and potentially influential American Jewish community to bring the United States into an active partnership with their cause.

\textsuperscript{61} Tschirgi, n.59, p.3.
Another set of forces helping to proposal the United States into a position of influence in the Middle East was unleashed in September 1939 by the outbreak of World War II. The war years witnessed a revolutionary change in the nature of American interest in the Middle East. In an immediate sense Washington’s traditional concern with established philanthropic, cultural, religions, and academic enterprises was quickly superseded by military considerations as vast tracts of the area became potential or actual battlegrounds between Allied and Axis forces. Almost simultaneously, American policy makers began attributing more value to Middle Eastern Oil, in which they recognized an important military asset.  

The end of the war did not reinstate the old cultural interests as the primary focus of American policy in the Middle East. American non-intervention had died at Pearl Harbor. However, in the Middle East it was not immediately replaced by any comprehensive framework for the formulation of foreign policy. still certain concrete objectives were seen as constituting definite interests in the Arab world. Chief among these were the security of American access to

62. Ibid., p. 4.
Middle Eastern oil and the preservation of cordial relations with the Arab Middle East. 63

While these regional interests were generally accepted as valid by American policy makers ever before the end of World War II, there was no clear cut policy formulation towards Palestine question. The time was ripe for a long time objective in American foreign policy not mere military expediency. 64

In brief 1939 stands as a watershed in the American approach to the Palestine problem. On the one hand, the termination of the Anglo-Zionist alliance in Palestine led directly to the creation in the United States of a large, vocal, and influential pressure group. This group was active in roping Washington as champion of the Zionist cause. On the other hand, the accelerated development of American interests in the Middle East needed to satisfy Arabs about U.S. objectives towards Palestine. Both options, Zionists or Arab, helped foreclose non-involvement in the Palestine controversy as a real option for the United States.

63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.
Roosvelt and His Administration:

Roosvelt and 1939 white paper: On the eve of the London conference, Zionists launched a campaign to obtain official American support against any alteration of British policy that might harm their position in Palestine. The Zionist leadership from abroad coordinated its efforts with its movements within America. The objective was to get the support of the American President Franklin D. Roosvelt.65

American political system is such that the keyrole in the execution of the foreign policy rests with the President. This reason led Zionists on winning over the White House. "If American intervention was to come in time to prevent a harmful shift in British policy, Zionists' arguments had to be taken straight to the President".66 Moreover, Zionists drew encouragement from Roosvelt's reputation as a friend of the Jewish people.67

Although Roosvelt's support was the fist priority for Zionists they did not ignore efforts to mobilize friendly opinion in other branches of government or among the general public. Both Congress and the State Department were

65. Ibid., p.17.
66. Ibid.
urged to speak out against the impending shift of British policy in Palestine. At the same time, Zionists promoted popular interest in their views through a variety of propaganda projects.

Zionist pressure to intercede at this juncture failed for all practical purposes. The White Paper was issued on May 17, 1939. Roosevelt did not open the issue with Britain. An enquiry into the President's reaction to the White Paper issue is an indicator of subsequent American involvement with Palestine imbroglio. However before we take into account the perspective of the President we have to take care of the conflicting views of the Congress and the Statement, on Palestine tangle.

The U.S. Congress and Palestine: To quote Frank E. Manuel, "the Department of State and Congress, of course, never thought alike on Palestine affairs under any administration because they moved in different orbits." 68 J.C. Hurewitz, Wrote, "Congress was sensitized to American public opinion." 69

68. Manuel, n.7., p.276.

The pro-Zionist public opinion in the United States was visible when the Congress reacted to the British White Paper. Just before the collapse of the London Conference, the Palestine issue was brought to the Senate by Arizana's Henry Ashurst. He is a telegram, sent earlier to Secretary of State Cordell Hull, had urged the President and the State Department to impress upon Great Britain that "Catastrophe" would result were the Balfour Declaration violated.\(^7\)

Again a pro-Zionist joint statement was given by 28 Senators. This was a considered opinion of 1/3rd of the senate and merited some attention. The joint statement called upon the British government to abandon any attempt of liquidating the Mandate in Palestine "based upon the Balfour Declaration". It further stated that a change in British policy might result in "a new state dominated by a narrow [non-Jewish] majority."\(^7\) It ignored the fact that the then Jewish community in Palestine constituted only 1/3rd of the whole population.


\(^7\) Ibid., March 17, 1939, p.2915.
The statement emphasised on both the Balfour Declaration and the 1924 Anglo American Convention on Palestine as binding commitments for Britain and U.S. to allow the Zionists, when they colonized Palestine. The 28 senators failed to perceive any ambiguity in the Balfour Declaration or they were ignorant of the fact that the Anglo-American convention did not empower the United States to prevent alterations in the Palestine mandate.

Publication of the White Paper on May 17, brought forth dogmatic statements, all of which were pro Zionist, in both the House and the Senate.

In the House, Representatives Everett Dirksen and Ralph Church voiced indignation over the White Paper. Representative Bender drew applause when he labeled the White Paper "a surrender to [Arab] force and violence", and called upon the U.S. "to demand" that London rescind its new policy.

This is significant to note that observations made by Senators and Representatives against the White Paper in the first half of 1939 did not include any reference to

72. Ibid., House, May 22, 1939, p.5901; May 23, 1939, p.5997.
73. Ibid., May 22, 1939, pp.5930-31.
possible American participation in the administration of Palestine ensuring the success of Zionism. "Congressional sympathy for Zionism stopped short of a willingness to assume active responsibility in Palestine; Congressional humanitarianism did not include a willingness to open American borders to the persecuted." 74

An important feature of the approach of the Congress towards Palestine problem was that it was not based upon consideration of the issues at stake within Palestine itself. It was also not based to any great extent upon consideration of international repercussions occasioned by the Arab-Zionist quagmire. Instead the action of the Congress was influenced to a great extent by an orchestrated public opinion. As the Zionist movement in American developed into a well organized and efficient pressure group after 1939, Congress became apparently more vulnerable to the sophistry of Zionists.

Department of State and Palestine: Manuel's earlier metaphorical distinction between the Congress and the State Department seems to be correct: the two did more in

74. Don Tschirgi, n.59, p.27.
different "orbits". Whereas the Congress viewed the Palestine problem in terms of its domestic importance the State Department looked into the issue of its international implications.

The prevailing State Department outlook on Palestine can be gauged by a memorandum sent by the Chief of the Division of Near Eastern Affairs, Wallace Murray to Secretary Hull and Undersecretary Sumner Welles:

"It is altogether desirable that the United State Government refrain from injecting itself in any way into the London discussions and wait until a solution has been reached or, failing such a solution, until the British Government announces its own plan of procedure."

Zionist attempts to obtain Roosevelt's help were opposed by Undersecretary of State Welles on grounds that in the deteriorating political situation in Europe it was not advisable for the United States to challenge the British government. Although Welles was sympathetic towards Zionist aspirations, he arrived at this conclusion reluctantly.

75. Murray to Hull and Welles, February 9, 1939. As quoted in Dan Tschirgi, n.59, p.29.

The turn of international scenario in the spring of 1939 led Secretary of State Hull to brush off Zionist requests for support. Hull resigned in the fall of 1944. Till then Hull maintained a rigid and restricted outlook on the legitimate scope of U.S. interest in Palestine:

"Our relations to Palestine rested on December British mandate Treaty of December, 3, 1924, whereby the United States had recognised Britain's Mandate...". 77

However, the advice given to the President by the State Department after 1939 pertaining to Palestine was based on international political considerations, rather than on restrictive narrow interpretation of 1924 agreement with Britain. Moreover, long before Hull left office events pointed to the fact that neither State Department nor the White House could avoid the Palestine issue by citing the Anglo-American Convention. It became progressively difficult for Washington to avoid the Palestine question by parroting the conception of American interests that had been formulated 20 years earlier. 78

78. Dan Tschirgi, n.59, p.31.
The President: As the chief executive authority of foreign policy of America, President Franklin Roosevelt became the focal point for the conflicting views, advice and pressures from which the American government's reaction to the White Paper was distilled. "In many ways the President's approach to the limited question of the White Paper presaged that which the White House, would follow during the next decade." 79

The White Paper controversy had put the President in an uncomfortable position. On the one hand, Roosevelt was aware of the British desire to revise its Palestine policy on account of strategic considerations, the President was also receptive to arguments advanced by his pro-Zionist intimates. Yet he did not agree with Congressional calls for strenuous pressure upon the British. Nor did he accept the State Department's advice that strict detachment should he followed. 80

As regards the White Paper Roosevelt did not act according to the advices he received. The tentative overtures he made to the British government through

79. Ibid., p.35.
80. Ibid.
Ambassador Kennedy were against the advises of the State Department. Roosevelt gave Zionists an exaggerated picture of his efforts on their behalf. This was also alone to an extent to appear in tune with a well-publicized and popular cause. "Yet the President does not appear to have been engaging in a completely cynical display of dissimulation in his relations with American Zionists. The truth of the matter seems to be that in the spring of 1939 he had not decided how to react to the White Paper." 81

After the release of the white paper on May 17, 1939, Roosevelt continued to recognise that Palestine was a British matter. Nevertheless, he privately expressed the belief that "the British are not wholly correct in saying that the framers of the Palestine Mandate could not have intended that Palestine should be converted into a Jewish state against the will of the Arab population of the country." 82 Only four months earlier Roosevelt had assured Ibn-Saud "that the Government has never taken any position different from that which it has maintained from the

81. Ibid.

82. Hull, n.77, 1530.
beginning toward this question."83 Now Ibn Saud has left to himself to interpret what American policy had been. Roosevelt recognized:

While the Palestine Mandate undoubtedly did not intend to take away the right of citizenship and of taking part in the Government on the part of the Arab population, it ... did intend to convert Palestine into a Jewish Home which might very possible become preponderantly Jewish within a comparatively short time".84

For these reasons the President felt that "it is something that we cannot give approval to by the United States", even though "there are some good ideas in regard to actual administration of government".85

Roosevelt in described his own reaction:

My snap judgement is that the British plan for administration [as embodied in the White Paper] can well be the basis of an administration to be set up and to carry on

84. Hull, n.77, p.65.
85. Ibid.
during the next five year; that during the next five years the 75,000 additional Jews should be allowed to go to Palestine to settle; and at the end of five years the whole problem could be resurveyed and at that time either continued on a temporary basis for another five years or permanently settled if that is then possible I believe that the Arabs could be brought to accept this because it seems clear that 75,000 additional immigrants can be successfully settled on the land and because also Arab immigration into Palestine since 1920 has vastly exceeded the total Jewish immigration during this period.86

The President's comment on Arab immigration into Palestine was of course, erroneous. Actually between 1920 and 1939, 306,049 Jews immigrated into Palestine, while during the same period the figure for Arab immigration was 18,630.87 This also shows that Roosevelt had a deficient factual grasp of the Palestine question. The memorandum also revealed his ambivalence toward the White Paper. In 1939 the President was of the belief that the right administration of the Palestine Mandate would ultimately result in the formation of a Jewish State. However, the contradiction between this belief and his sudden realization gave rise to uncomfortable dilemma that he exhibited toward.

86. United States, Department of State, FRUS, Vol. IV, p. 757.
87. See foot note, n. 73, in Dan Tschirgi, n.59, p.277.
the White Paper. He took refuge in favour of immediate necessity.

Roosevelt's response to the White Paper showed his understanding that any policy purposefully directed toward the Palestine problem should take into consideration the political future of Palestine. White responding to the White Paper he consciously opted for a policy of expediency, but he did so in the belief that it was adequate only as a temporary measure.\(^88\)

**Roosevelt and the Palestine Resolution:** On January 27, 1944, two identically worded resolutions were introduced in the House of Representatives. The proposal measures called for the United States to use its good offices and take appropriate measures, to the end that the doors of Palestine shall be opened country, and that there shall be full opportunity for colonization, so that the Jewish people may ultimately reconstitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth.\(^89\) A similar measure was introduced in

\(^88\) Dan Tschirgi, n.59, p.37.

the Senate four days later, jointly sponsored by Robert Wagner and Republican leader Robert Taft.\(^9\)

The resolution as presented was almost identical with the Baltimore Programme\(^9\) which had called for the establishment of a Jewish commonwealth. An interesting aspect in the Congressional resolution was the substitution of the word "reconstitute" in place of "be established the obvious intention was to create the impression that a Jewish commonwealth had once existed and that its resolution was only proper. This phraseology enabled those so disposed to view a modern Jewish state as a fulfilment of Biblical prophecy.\(^9\)

The resolutions placed the Roosvelt administration in a quandary. Still determined to avoid any commitment on Palestine, the White House could not ignore the adverse effect that its out-right opposition might have on the Democratic Party in the November elections. The problem was aggravated by the impending Allied invasion of Europe and

\(^9\) Ibid., p.99.

91. Biltmore Programe discussed in Chapter II.

the need to avoid any out-break in the Middle East that would complicate the military situation. On account of these factors, the administration, started a secret, well coordinated campaign to prevent Congressional approval of the Palestine resolutions. Slightly over six weeks after the measures were first introduced, these obstructive tactics were successful. However, the actions of the White House raised serious questions in the minds of leading Zionists about Roosevelt's attitude toward their cause. 93

In order to offset Zionist anger over the scuttling of the resolutions Roosevelt received the Co-chairman of the American Zionist Emergency Council, Rabbis Stephen Wise and Abba Hilled Silver, on March 9, 1944. 94 This was some consolation to them. Roosevelt met with Wise and Silver. The President apparently promised that he would speak out clearly in support of Zionism at a later date. In the meantime, he authorized them to make the following statement:

The President authorized us to say that the American Government has never given its approval to the White Paper of 1989.

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93. Dan Tschirgi, n.59, p.98.

94. Stevens, n.92, p.80.
The President is happy the doors of Palestine are today open to Jewish refugees, and that when future decisions are reached, full justice will be done to those who seek a Jewish National Home, for which our Government and the American people have always had the deepest sympathy and today more than ever, in view of the tragic plight of hundreds of thousands of homeless Jewish refugees.95

It is interesting to note that on the very day when he received the Rabbis Roosevelt wrote concerning the 'volume of protests' from the Arab world stirred by the impending resolution, he elaborated, "what happens if delicate international situations get into party politics." He was also happy that the resolutions were under control in the House.96

It is quite obvious that party politics had influenced the President's announcement to the Rabbis. For not only, was the Democratic Party concerned, with the coming


elections, but the President and Rabbi Wise were friends of long standing. Wise had supported the President in all of his campaigns and had even made numerous addresses throughout the country on Roosevelt's behalf, Wise had acted as a consultant on problems affecting Jews and it was expected that Roosevelt would give him sympathetic hearing. However, Roosevelt was not going to be cornered.

Encouraged by their favourable reception at White House Wise and Silver drafted another statement on March 13, 1944, for issuance by the President. The suggested declaration supported free and unrestricted entry of Jews into Palestine with full opportunity for colonization, and also stated that the purpose and intent of American policy towards Palestine was to see a Jewish commonwealth constituted in that country. No reply was sent to this communication, and on Hull's advice, the President merely made a general declaration on March 24 dealing with European refugees.

97. Stevens, n.92, p.8.
Arab reaction to the Statement of the President of March 9 was prompt. Roosevelt's reply attempted to straddle the issue. He admitted that he was correctly quoted. The President also pointed out that his statement had mentioned a Jewish national home rather than a Jewish Commonwealth. Furthermore, although the United State had never expressed approval of the White Paper, it had never, on the other hand, "taken a position relative to it." \(^{101}\) Hull remarked:

In General the President at times talked both ways to Zionists and Arabs, besieged as he was by each camp. Rabbis Wise and Silver believed that the President had made pledges to them. The State Department made no pledges. \(^{102}\)

**Election of 1944:** Hull's suggestion to the President on July 26, 1944, advising that the leaders of both parties refrain from making statements during the election campaign which might "tend to arouse the Arabs or upset the precarious balance of forces in Palestine". \(^{103}\) This was not paid attention to by either parties.

\(^{101}\) Hull, n.77, p.1936.

\(^{102}\) Ibid.

\(^{103}\) Ibid., p.3500.
In June the Republican National Convention approved a resolution that declared:

In order to give refuge to millions of distressed Jewish men, women and children driven from their homes by tyranny, we call for the opening of Palestine to their unrestricted immigration and land ownership, so that in accordance with the full intent and purpose of the Balfour Declaration of 1917, .... Palestine may be constituted as free and democratic commonwealth. We condemn the failure of the President to insist that the mandatory of Palestine carry out the provision of the Balfour Declaration and the mandate, while he pretends to support them.\textsuperscript{104}

The Democrats became increasingly anxious. They also bid for Jewish votes and were at pains to counter the Republicans' apprehensions increased that failure to have a competitive Palestine plank in the Democratic platform would seriously hurt the President's prospects in the New York Jewish community. Judge Bernard A. Rosenblatt underlined the importance of the Jewish vote in the crucial areas:

New York is entitled to 47 electoral votes, while only 266 electoral votes are necessary to elect a President. Whether the vote of the State of New York goes to one party or another land that may be by relatively few votes in a population of over 13 million) will make a difference of 14 votes in the electoral college, so that it may be readily understood why a presidential contest may hinge on the political struggle in the State of New York, and to a lesser extent in the large states of Pennsylvania (36) Illinois (27), or Ohio (23).\textsuperscript{105}

The Democratic platform also adopted the Palestine blank that outdid the Republican one. Although shorter, the Democrat's pronouncement called for a "Jewish Commonwealth" and was, therefore, more pleasing to the Zionists:

We favour the opening of Palestine to unrestricted Jewish immigration and colonization, and such a policy as to result in the establishment of a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{105} Bernard A. Rosenblatt in Zionist Review, November 29, 1946, p.3. As cited in Stevens n.92, pp.82-83.

Competition for Jewish vote did not abate. In early October the Republican Presidential candidate, Thomas Dewey, promised that as president he would work toward opening Palestine to unlimited Jewish immigration and land ownership and for the country's "reconstitution" ... as a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth.\textsuperscript{107}

On October 15 Roosevelt through a message reinforced the position taken by the Democratic Convention in July. The President repeated the text of the Democrat's plank and added:

Efforts will be made to find appropriate ways and means of effectuating this policy as soon as practicable. I know how long and ardently the Jewish people have worked and prayed for the establishment of Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish Commonwealth. I am convinced that the American people give their support to this aim and if re-elected, shall help to bring about its realization.\textsuperscript{108}

Indeed it has a tribute to the effectiveness of the techniques set in motion by Dr. Silver that the Biltmore

\textsuperscript{107} Dan Tschirgi, n.59, p.109.

\textsuperscript{108} FDR to Wagner, October 15, 1944, Wagner Papers. As cited in Stevens, 92, pp.60-61.
Program had at last found an echo in a presidential statement". Roosevelt who uptil now had vigorously tried to avoid any uncompromising support to the Zionists fell to the Democratic election fears in 1944.

Post election policy: Roosevelt won the elections. Zionists once again pressed for government action for pro-Zionist Congressional resolutions. In the meanwhile Edward Stettinius had replaced Cordell Hull as secretary of state. Stettinius wished to discuss the issue with the President. When the Secretary of State brought up the question with Roosevelt a few days later, it was decided to inform Wise that the administration felt that it was not wise to consider the resolutions this time. Stettinius therefore also informed the Zionists of the administration's position. Zionists leaders were deeply divided over how to react to these signs of official recalcitrance.

The President was also well informed of the Arab unrest produced by pro-Zionist declarations of Republican and

109. Stevens, n.92, p.84.
111. Ibid.
Democratic candidates. There entered an additional factor. This was the growing Soviet interest in the Middle East. However the President still had an open mind on the Palestine issue:

Give me an opportunity to talk with Stalin and Churchill. There are all kinds of scheme - crack pot and otherwise being advanced. Perhaps some solution will come out of this whole matter. Naturally I do not want to see a war between a million or two, people in Palestine against the whole Muslim world in that area-seventy million strong. 112

The President's mention of Stalin and Churchill referred to his impending journey to Yalta. The tripartite summit meeting, held between February 4, and 11, brought forth Zionist demand for a definite action by the administration. Senator Wagner reminded the President that the discussions abroad might be "of fateful significance for the Palestine issue and the future of Jews as a people". The Senator argued that "if Arab consent is to be a prerequisite of any political settlement [in Palestine]".

112. Ibid., p.114.
there can be no hope of justice to the Jewish people." He said what had to be done was to establish a Jewish state with "determination and speed," for the Arabs would accept an "accomplished fact".¹¹³

Nonetheless, the President had already come to conclusion that prevented him from falling into line with the strategy advocated by Wagner. Retaining a firm faith in his own diplomatic abilities, the President had decided to meet with Ibn Saud in order to explore possibilities for some agreed solution to the Palestine problem.

Ibn Saud: At the end of the Yalta Conference, during which the topic of Palestine did not arise, the President went to Syez Canal, where without prior announcement he met Ibn Saud abroad the American warship Quinsy on February 14, 1945.¹¹⁴

Ibn Saud was straightforward in his opinion towards Zionism to which he was opposed. To Roosevelt's enquiry about immigration of Jews to Palestine Saud said they return to lands from which they had been driven. In his opinion, those who for various reasons could not do so should be

¹¹³. Ibid.

¹¹⁴. Ibid., p.115.
given "living space in the Axis countries which oppressed them." According to the official American memorandum of Roosevelt's conversation with Ibn Saud, the King then elaborated on the Palestine issue:

His Majesty --- expounded the case of the Arabs and their legitimate rights in their lands and stated that the Arabs and the Jews could never cooperate, neither in Palestine, nor in any other country. His Majesty called attention to the increasing threat to the existence of the Arabs and the crisis which has resulted from continued Jewish immigration and the purchase of land by the Jews. His Majesty further stated that the Arabs would rather die than yield their lands to the Jews.116

When Ibn Saud ended these remarks with an appeal for American support, Roosevelt replied:

He wished to assure His Majesty that he would do nothing to assist the Jews against the Arabs and would make no move hostile to the Arab people. He reminded His Majesty

115. Ibid.

that it was impossible to prevent speeches and resolutions in congress or in the press which may be made on any subject. His reassurance concerned his own future policy as Chief Executive of the United State.\textsuperscript{117}

Roosevelt seemed deeply impressed by the firmness of Ibn Sauds' views. The President later remarked that of "all the men he had talked to in his life, he had least satisfaction from this iron willed monarch".\textsuperscript{118} While returning to Washington Roosevelt told Secretary of State Stettinius that he looked forward to a conference with Congressional leaders to "re-examine our entire policy in Palestine."\textsuperscript{119}

Zionists were caught unawares over the surprise meeting with Ibn Saud. Zionist's apprehensions and anxieties increased on March 1, when the President addressed the Congressional audience:

Of the problems of Arabia I learned more about the whole problem, the Muslim problem, the Jewish problem by

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. pp.115-116.

\textsuperscript{118} Elliot Roosevelt, \textit{As he saw it} (New York, 1946), p.245.

talking with Ibn Saud for five minutes than I could have learned in an exchange of two or three dozen letters.¹²⁰

The President’s comments after coming from Yalta raised another controversy. Democratic Senator from Colorado, Edwin Johnson used scathing language:

With all due respect to the President and King Ibn Saud, I must say that the choice of the desert king as expert on the Jewish question is nothing short of amazing --- I imagine that even Fala [Roosevelt’s pet dog] would be more of an expert¹²¹

This statement of the Senator is an indicator for pro-Zionist thinking in U.S. Johnson finds Ibn Saud irrelevant to Palestine problem while he himself sitting in America feels appropriate to pass judgements on the fate of Palestinians who constituted on overwhelming majority. The very existence of Palestinians and that too in overwhelming majority, was jarring in the Zionist scheme of things.


The Zionist reaction led to the return of Dr. Silver and his more militant policies.\textsuperscript{122} The anger abated by mid-March, when Rabi Wise was received at the White House and authorized to issue the following statement in the President's name:

"I made my position on Zionism clear in October. That position I have not changed and shall continue to seek to bring about its earliest realization."

\textsuperscript{123} This statement led to strong reaction from Arab world in the form of numerous protest to among which one was from Ibn Saud. In response to a letter from Ibn Saud, the State Department reassured the king that no decision would be reached without consulting Arabs and Jews and assured the King the Roosevelt would take no action "which might prove hostile to the Arab people."\textsuperscript{124} Similar replies were forwarded to Syrian and Iraqi leaders.

On April 12, 1945, Roosevelt died. His association with the palestine question may aptly he described as 'self contradictory involvement.

\textsuperscript{122} Stevens, n.92, p.90.


\textsuperscript{124} Stettinius, n.119, p.290.
Roosvelt and Zionism: David Niles, a White House functionary once confessed to "serious doubts in my mind that Israel would have come into being if Roosvelt had lived". 125

Roosvelt was in a habit of turning lose his political imagination. Roosvelt had a vision for Palestine, more ambitious than his British allies or even contemporary Zionism dared to advocate. "As a factor in policy determination Roosvelt's extravagant notions evaporated with his death .... But they are highly revealing of premises that American idealists brought to consideration of Palestine for the coming postwar era..." 126

The President, as early as 1938, had complained to Cordell Hull that, in the Balfour Declaration, "The British made no secret of the fact they promised Palestine to the Jews. Why are they now reneging on their promise?" 127 The statement is an indicator of Roosvelt's vision and thinking on Palestine: Britain and the World at large had promised Palestine to the Jews.

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126. Ibid.
127. FRUS, 1939, IV, pp.748-58.
A plan started taking form in his mind. He visualized the transfer of entire Arab population to a nearby land. Two hundred thousand to three hundred thousand Arabs should be resettled, at a cost of some $300 million. Britain and France should together put up one-third of that, the United States another third and wealthy Jews of the Western democracies the rest. Twice he raised this notion with British representatives, only to the firmly told that no amount of financial inducement would move the Palestinian Arabs. 128

The President was unconvinced and told Zionist friends early in 1939, as they reported, that "as soon as he was somewhat relieved from the pressure of other affairs, he might try to tackle the job." 129 Thus emerged a second theme in Roosevelt's Palestine vision: once the pressure of war were lifted, he would himself move in to resolve the dilemma that had resisted the efforts of statesmanship before.

Roosevelt first met Chain Weizmann, he pressed his Zionist visitor on the economic absorptive capacity of

128. Grose, n.125, p.35.
129. Ibid.
Palestine. Roosevelt asked breezily, "What about the Arabs? Can't that be settled with a little baksheesh?" Weizmann explained to the President that uprooting the entire Arab population would not be quite as simple as that.  

During 1942, Roosevelt, during Christmas season expressed his thoughts on Palestine to his neighbour and Treasury Secretary Henry J. Morgenthau, Jr., who remembered Roosevelt's ramblings vividly:

What I think I will do is this. I would call Palestine a religious country. Then I would leave Jerusalem the way it is and have it run by the Orthodox Greek Catholic Church, the Protestants and the Jews - have a joint committee run it....I actually would put a barbed wire around Palestine, and I would begin to move the Arabs out.... I would provide land for the Arabs in some other part of the Middle East....Each time we move out an Arab we would bring in another Jewish family.... But I don't want to bring in more than they can economically support.... It would be an independent nation just like any other nation.. Naturally, if there are 90% Jews, the Jews would dominate the government...

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130. Ibid., p.36.
There are lots of places to which you could move the Arabs. All you have to do is drill a well, because there is this large underground water supply, and we can move the Arabs, to places where they can really live... 131

The most revealing portrayal of the Roosevelt vision, however, came after—not before—the election. It was reported by an associate totally aloof from any possible ethnic aspiration, Edward R. Stettinius the man who had replaced Secretary Hull. Roosevelt spoke of his thinking in no uncertain terms. Stettinius noticed in his diary of November 10, 1944, "Palestine should be for the Jews and no Arabs should be in it". "He has definite ideas on the subject... It should be exclusive Jewish territory". 132

In a confidential talk, after an election there was no need for the President to disguise his true sentiments. These sentiments, as talked to Stettinius, envisaged a Jewish Palestine in the original meaning of the Balfour Declaration as he understood it. Roosevelt envisioned that the Arabs must be moved out of Palestine, whether they liked it or not, whether with "baksheesh" or resettlement funds.


Palestine should be made exclusive Jewish territory. He intended "to point out to Ibn Saud what an infinitessimal part of the whole area was occupied by Palestine and that he could not see why a portion of Palestine could not be given to the Jews without harming in any way the interests of the Arabs". 133

Nowhere in Roosevelt's record is there an indication that, the President envisaged the unilateral proclamation of a sovereign Jewish state such as occurred in May, 1948. 134 Roosevelt's Middle Eastern policy implied coexistence between Jews and Arabs. This sounds like the binationalism that became the banner of the State Department and of all who opposed the notion of a Jewish state. But Roosevelt did not think of Palestine alone when he thought of Arab-Jewish cooperation. Like the most extreme Zionists, he determined that Palestine itself would be secure and exclusive for Jewish nationalism. Arab nationalism would find its full expression in the newly independent Arab states of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq. Together these new nations on the

133. Schechtman, n.121, p.110.
134. Grose, n.125, p.38.
Middle East, the Jewish state and the Arab states would form a wide binational federation to promote their mutual development.135

Given the restive nature of the West Asian society, expecting a harmonious cooperation, was a far cry. Roosevelt was bugged with a big question mark how to promote cooperation between the two communities. What could Arab nationalists and Jewish nationalists do to strive towards their own aspirations without crushing the aspirations of others? There were the questions Roosevelt was pondering when his days came to an end and the problem became the responsibility of another.

From Truman to the U.N.O.

The biographers of Harry S. Truman have produced contrasting biographical portraits of him. Reading through in biographies a picture emerges that he was a man of great contradictions. He was not nearly so ignorant as some contemporary observers thought of him, but neither does his record quite fit in with the legend some latter day historians have constructed.136

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135. Ibid.

Truman had little preparation for the position into which President Roosevelt's death catapulted him. It took time to grow into the job. Though no scandal tarnished Truman's image he had retained certain characteristics which were the hallmark of a 'machine bred politician'. Robert Denovan has defined these as "intense partisanship, stubborn loyalty, a certain insensitivity about transgressions of political associates and a disinclination for the companionship for intellectuals and artists". \(^{137}\) Most of his friends were allegedly "plain, obscure, even mediocre men who shared his love of politics and poker". There were of course exceptions to this generalization, Dean Acheson being the most obvious. \(^{138}\)

Truman may have been unsophisticated in international affairs, but he quickly adopted an approach to the Palestine question. This enabled him ultimately to steer clear though tempestuous course between the whirlpools of Zionism and British imperialism. \(^{139}\)

\(^{137}\) As quoted in Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine and the great powers 1945-1948* (New Jersey, 1992), p.44.

\(^{138}\) Ibid.

To his domestic Jewish constituency he persistently expressed compassion for the refugees. At the same time he resisted commitments that might alienate the Arabs and jeopardize the supply of Middle Eastern oil. To the British he revealed a characteristic American suspicion of imperialism and the usual British 'stunt' of deviousness and delay. If any one thing was clear in his mind it was the necessity to avoid being sucked into Middle Eastern troubles that would involve American troops. To Zionists he made public pronouncements to resolve simultaneously the problems of the displaced persons and the Jewish national home, but in fact he offered tangible American assistance only in the form of transport for the 100,000 Jews to Palestine. He resented Zionist pressure, but he never forgot that the three million Jews of New York constituted the largest metropolitan Jewish population in the entire world and that their vote might be decisive in a national election. Like Bevin, Truman had a remarkable capacity for occasional indiscreet and honest comment. When asked for an explanation of his pro-Jewish policy he once replied: "I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for
the success of Zionism. I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs in my constituent's."  \[140\]

This statement of Truman shows his intense pragmatism towards a political imbroglio. It aims at his pro-Zionist stance though not on account of human considerations, which he was not devoid of but down to earth practical compulsions.

Nevertheless one comes across quite frequently, a wide discrepancy between Truman's private opinions and his public utterances. He came to the Presidency a moderate conservative, but had inherited a liberal mandate and a liberal set of advisors. The gap between compulsive public profession and genuine emotional commitment was responsible for much of his erratic performance. His impulsive spontaneity, followed frequently by embarrassing retraction, gave rise in Washington to popular quip: "To err is Truman". \[141\]

Truman wanted to be the master of his own Palestine policy. Nonetheless, these were conflicting demands within

\[140\] Ibid.

\[141\] Cohen, n.137, p.41.
his administration and contradictory pledges given by his inimitable predecessor. Roosvelts' right hand, had promised sympathy for the Jewish national home while his left hand conveyed assurances that he would take no action which might prove hostile, to the Arab people”.

During Truman's presidency the theme of continuity may be found in his concern for the Jewish vote and his reluctance to commit American troops. To Truman's critics he appeared to lunge from crisis to crisis, and in the spring of 1948 he did in effect lose control of American policy towards Palestine, but when he regained it he acted decisively in favour of partition with results comparable to F.D.R.'s great triumphs in world politics.142

Truman succeeded as a President in the last weeks of the war in Europe, when the Western world was in Europe, when the Western world was discovering Nazi death camps. There is no reason to doubt that Truman too was genuinely moved by the plight of those who had survived Nazi-occupied Europe. However, Truman had other mundane reasons for airing his sympathies for the Jewish victims.

142. Louis, n.139, p.421.
As a nonelected president eager to succeed in his own right, and indeed, as a highly unpopular President during his first term, Truman could hardly have failed to be less than hypersensitive to the anticipated effect on the many Jewish voters of his policy regarding the Jewish refugee's or the displaced person (DP) problem. 143

White House aides: At the White House, the two most influential aids regarding Palestine were Clark Clifford and David Niles. Califford has been credited with reorganizing the shambles in the administration. Niles has been referred to as the administration's portable wailing wall", in reference to his function as liaison between minority groups and the President. 144

Clifford, who served Truman as special counsel from 1946 to 1950, and went on to become a successful Washington lawyer and Secretary of Defense in the 1960s, undoubtedly held great sway over the President. He became Truman's advocate in debates with the State Department over

143. Cohen, n.137, p.45.
144. Ibid., p.46.
Palestine. The memoirs of Eliahu Elath (Epstein), who served at the time as head of the Zionist Organization’s Washington office, reveal that both Clifford and Niles were briefed regularly by Elath and his office. It is evident that Elath’s material often provided the basis of Califford’s arguments against the State Department’s view.  

Much later, at the end of 1976, Clifford attempted to vindicate Truman’s (and his own) Palestine policy, before a meeting of American historians. His lecture was defensive in tone, claiming that Truman had been guided by a broad national strategy, influenced heavily by humane, religious sentiment toward the Jews, in which political factors played but a minor role. 

Clifford failed to mention any of the specific actions that Truman took with elections in view. Clifford is guarded enough not to mention his and or Niles connection with the Jews.

145. Ibid.

In November 1947, Clifford submitted an interesting memorandum to the President regarding the influence of the Jewish vote in the United States:

The Jewish vote, insofar as it can be thought of as a block is important only in New York. But (except for Wilson in 1916) no candidate since 1876 has lost New York and work the Presidency, and its 47 votes are naturally the first prize in any election".147

Clifford memorandum, which "became the blueprint for the 1948 campaign waged by Truman," was consciously "based solely on an appraisal of the politically advantageous course to follow". Clifford wrote an apologia in 1976 and selected the following extract from the same memorandum: "In the long run, there is likely to the greater gain if the Palestine problem is approached on the basis of reaching decisions founded upon intrinsic merit".148

It is quite possible that the "Jews electoral weight" thesis was being fed to the White House regularly by the

147. Clifford, n.146, p.43.

148. Ibid. See also. J. Snetsinger, Truman, the Jewish Vote and the Creation of Israel (Stanford, 1974), pp.140, 95.
Zionist office in Washington Bernard Baruch, the Jewish financier to more than one President thought the electoral importance of the New York Jews alone outweighed by far the entire Arab lobby:

You, let me have the Jewish vote of New York and I will bring you the head of Ibn Saud on a platter! The administration will sell all seven Arab states if it is a question of retaining the support... of the Jews of New York alone; never mind the rest of the country. 149

Such smouldering arrogance bears testimony to the fact that American Presidency was reduced to the whims and fancies of local electorates who could inject fear in the most powerful executive of the World. Dare you ignore us? was the attitude among the Zionist lobbyists in America.

The role played by David Niles was same what different from that played by Clifford. Niles was the behind the scenes liaison between the President and the Zionists. The son of Russian Jewish immigrants, Niles had begun his governmental career during World War I as a clerk in the Department of Labor, graduating to administrative assistant

to Roosevelt, specializing in minority problems. Truman kept him on, and Niles served him well during the frequent stormy episodes involving Palestine. Niles took upon himself the task to protect the President from the Zionist lobby. When the President made a decision displeasing to the Zionists, Niles would tell them that the "career people" at the State Department had misled the White House.¹⁵⁰

Niles' position in the White House was anomalous. George Elsey was U.S. Naval Reserve officer at the White House, 1942-1947 and assistant to Clifford, 1947-1949 has claimed that Niles was a most secretive individual. He rarely confided to his White House colleagues what he told the president, or what he had recommended.¹⁵¹

What made Niles and his White House connection so valuable to the Zionists was the rapport that existed between leaders of the Jewish movement and the administrative assistant. Niles worked closely with the top echelon of Zionist leadership, the Jewish Agency's Executive. Eliahu Epstein, who later changed his name to the Hebrew Eliahu Eilat, was the Jewish Agency's Executive

¹⁵⁰. Cohen, n.137, p.49.
¹⁵¹. Ibid.
member and Agency's administrative arm labeled Niles as "our friend" in the White House. Correspondence dealing with the Jewish strategy and their battle to win Truman's favour linked lines with Epstein, Meyer Weisgal, Nahum Goldman, and Stephen Wise, all members of the powerful Executive.

Concerted attempts were made by the Zionists leadership to keep Niles apprised of Jewish Agency's every move. Following a private conversation with Lord Inver Chapel, the British Ambassador to the U.S.A., Nahum Goldman wrote a confidential report for distribution to members of the executive. Goldman also recommended that a copy be sent to Niles for his perusal. Accordingly, Niles was aware that Britain was likely to turn the Palestine problem over to the United Nations at the same time that Zionists learned of the plan.

A memorandum Niles wrote for the President on May 27, 1946, provides an excellent example of his advocacy of a pro-Zionist policy and his ability to use his position to ensure that the Zionist cause received hearing by the

152. Snetsinger, n.148, p.36.
153. Ibid., pp.36-37.
154. Ibid., p.37.
President. Niles advised Truman not to be disturbed from supporting Jewish claims for fear of losing the friendship of the King of Saudi Arabia. "You know that President Roosevelt said to same of the privately he could do anything that needed to be done with Ibn Saud with a few million dollars." 155

The person who diligently argued the Zionist cause at the higher level of government, the accolade Niles received were well deserved Moshe Sharett, while serving as the Israeli Foreign Minister reflected on the 'inestimable assistance' and far-reaching effectiveness' of Niles's 'White House labors." 156 Forestal noted that the State Department was "seriously embarrassed and handicapped by the activities of Niles at the White House in join directly to the President on matters involving Palestine. 157

State Department: The State Department stood in opposition to the White House aides. The officials of the State Department could not reconcile what they felt to be their duty with the President's political ambitions. The

155. Ibid., p.39.
156. Ibid.
157. Ibid.
Departments innumerable warnings about the damage that would result to American interests in the Middle East if the President resorted to a policy which went against the interest of the Arabs. 158

Truman was cautioned by Secretary of State Edward Stettinius that the Zionists would undoubtedly try to commit the President to their own programme for Palestine. This was resented by Truman. "In their patronizing tone, appropriate from a board of senior prefects to a new boy in the lower forms, the diplomatic officers committed an indiscretion they would never live down in Truman's mind." 159

Truman recalled:

IN those days no body seemed to think I was aware of anything .... a communication from some of the striped pants' boys warning me .... in affect telling me to watch my step, that I did not really understand what was going on over there and that I ought to leave it to the 'experts'....". 160

158. FRUS, Vol. VIII, 1945, 90 per cent of the section on Palestine is taken up with such warnings.

159. Grose, n.125, p.39.

160. Ibid., p.39.
When it came to Palestine the situation as it existed, was of mutual contempt between the White House and State Department. Nonetheless like Roosevelt, Truman also considered the Presidential prerogative as absolute. Both Roosevelt and Truman believed that the functions of the Cabinet stopped at giving advice. But the advisers retained their influence with him not because their membership in the Cabinet, but because of their close personal relationship with him.161

The State Department felt that they had been unfairly deprived of their rightful role in the policy making process. F. Wilson, the wartime head, has contemptuously remarked:

The information that the professionals gave the Presidents however, was complete and their advice was sound. Subsequent events have borne them out. It is no exaggeration to say that our relations with the entire Arab world never recovered from the events of 1947-1948, when we sided with the Jews against the Arabs.162

162. E. Wilson, Decision on Palestine (Standford, 1979), p.154.
The Near Eastern Division experts did not believe that Truman had even begun to grasp the essence of the issues involved. The division's Chief of Research at the time Harry N. Haward, asserted later that the President had not understood the situation in the Middle East, nor the Palestine problem nor the Balfour Declaration. ¹⁶³

Nevertheless, Truman, given his understanding of Palestine and the Middle East, really did believe as he stated in his memoirs. He writes that he could at one and the same time support Zionism, protect his own political future, and safeguard the national interest in the Middle East.¹⁶⁴

The point to remember here is this, the Arab oil had not become a major factor in the economy, and the balance of mutual dependence weighed heavily in American's favour. A study of American Saudi relations during this period has concluded that the oil of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East played little, if any, role in Truman's final consideration of the Palestine problem.¹⁶⁵ However Arab oil did play a

significant role in the Marshal plan in European economic recovery though later on. It can be visualized that State Department deliberately exaggerated the risks of the Arabs denying their oil the West, when they knew that Ibn Saud had at least no intention of doing such thing. This irked the President and he lifted the Palestine problem out of their domain. 166

On the initiative of a moderate Zionists leader, Nahum Goldmann, some interest was generated in the State Department and Pentagon for the partition of Palestine between a Jewish and an Arab state. However, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry rejected such a departure and offered instead the possibility of a binational state. In this state "Jew shall not dominate Arab and Arab shall not dominate Jew". 167 Subsequent Anglo-American talks between Herbert Morrison and Henry F. Grady refined the formula further. The Committees recommendations were basically a federal system of two autonomous states with a strong

166. Cohen, n.137, p.54.

167. The Anglo American Committee and its working has been dealt in the third chapter of this dissertation. For analysis of the recommendations of the said committee, see M.S. Agwani, The United States And The Arab World, 1945-1952, (Aligarh, 1955). See Appendices, no.1 for the Text of the recommendation in the same book.
central government under British direction. The admission of the 100,000 was made conditional upon the acceptance of the report as a whole.

Faced with the Zionist opposition Truman hesitated. However he remarked, "I cannot believe that the gap between the proposals which have been put forward is too great to be bridged by men of reason and goodwill. To such a solution our government could give its support".

Critics in Britain and America have charged that Truman could follow only the partisan politics of the United States as for example the Yom Kippur statement on the 4th October 1946 in which the President offered soothing assurances of fidelity to American Jewry on the eve of their solemn holiday.

The 4th October 1946 represented an important date in the history of the Zionist movement and British imperialism in the Middle East. In the summer and autumn of 1946 the breeze of 'partition' developed into what the British

169. FRUS, 1946, VII, pp.679-82.
170. Yom Kippur statement and the British reaction has been discussed in the II1rd chapter of this dissertation.
Ambassador in Washington, Lord Inverchapel, referred to as a 'whirlwind'. It gained great momentum when Truman etc. appeared to give support to 'the creation of a viable Jewish state in control of its own immigration and economic policies in an adequate area of Palestine instead of the whole of Palestine'. The principal drafter of the statement was Dean Acheson in the State Department and for all its comforting tone, it most specifically did not endorse the Zionist demand for a Jewish state in Palestine. 172

The President probably did not grasp all of the nuances of his own statement. If read carefully, it pleaded for compromise than as a full blown endorsement of partition. Nevertheless the American press unanimously emphasized the apart about partition, as if this only represented the President's stand. Not a single newspaper has pointed up this part of the statement, 'binding of the gap' and all the headlines carried by the papers read "Truman's Support of Jewish State". 173

171. Louis, n.139, p.439.
173. Louis, n.139, p.439.
What dominated Truman’s mind was another facet of Jewish problem that occurred after the war. There remained, a massive number of refugees, largely Jews from Eastern Europe who had no desire to return to the anti-Semitism of their former homes. The State Department considered this matter separate from the Palestine tangle, but for Truman this became the heart of the matter.

This situation of the displayed persons of Europe specially brought to the fore front in such a way that it attracted President’s serious attention. This episode which is one of the greatest unresearched turning points in the formulation of American’s Palestine policy, known as the Harrison fact finding mission to Europe.174 A few alert Zionists spotted the Harrison mission as a useful instrument in their campaign, and his views were helpful to them even though they were not justified by the facts at the time of his investigation.175

Harrison Mission: Treasury Secretary Morgenthau had urged Truman during his first month in office to raise the problem of the displaced persons before the Cabinet. But the President let it drop. A short time later he agreed to the

175. Ibid., See note, n.19, p.58.
proposal to send an emissary on an investigation of the DP 
camps.

The State Department succeeded in vitoeing Morgenthau's 
pro Zionist candidate for this mission and nominated instead 
Earl. G. Harrison. Recognizing in Harrison a man completely 
unacquainted, for all his general experience, with the 
particular subtlties of this mission, Meyer W. Weisgal a 
close associate of Weizmann suggested to Morgenthau that the 
envoy be accompanied by someone "thoroughly steeped in the 
Jewish situation". He proposed the name of Joseph J. 
Schwartz. Schwartz belonged to an organisation which was non 
Zionist, sometimes even anti Zionist. Yet Weisgal knew this 
man. Weisgal wrote, although Dr. Schwartz is on the staff of 
the J.D.C. (Joint Distribution Committee), we have absolute 
faith in his integrity and Zionist convictions.176

It was not that Harrison was unaware of the Zionists 
interest converging on him. John Pehle told him frankly that 
his investigation had been urged by "Political Zionists" who 
were interested to know the desire of these people to 
emigrate from Europe.177 He was won over by them at last. 
Harrison's report to Truman, submitted late in August 1945,

176. Ibid., p.41.
177. Ibid.
conveyed the DP plight in vivid terms. "We appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them," Harrison noted (Truman underlined the passage). "They are in concentration camps in large numbers under our military guard instead of S.S. troops. One is led to wonder whether the German people, seeing this, are not supposing that we are following or at least condoning Nazi policy." Then Harrison takes a step further to make judgment about the ultimate fate of the DP's. He concluded that "Palestine is definitely and pre-eminently the first choice." 178

Truman made the Harrison's report public and it created a sensation. However what made the lasting impact was Harrison's political conclusion that he drew: Never before and against all the arguments of Britain and the State Department, Truman was shown that the difficulties of Europe's surviving Jews and the political future of Palestine were aspects of the same problem. Perhaps the impact of Harrison's report was great. What he saw in the Harrison's report was a moving portrait of human beings. "The misery it depicted could not be allowed to continue", he said. If Palestine was what they wanted and no other

country was coming forward with resettlement offers least of all the United States - then Palestine it should be. Truman dispatched a copy of the Harrison report to the British Prime Minister Atlee, by passing all the avenues of diplomacy and saying, "The main solution appears to lie in the quick evacuation of as many as possible of the non-repatriable Jews who wish it, to Palestine. If it is to be effective such actions should not be delayed". It is ironical that Truman wanted to disgorge the gush of humanitarian feelings towards the Jews, in Palestine at the cost of Palestinians.

There appeared to be another school of thought in the United States which consoled itself with the idea that in supporting the Zionist cause they were indirectly undermining "British imperialism" in the Middle East.

However, the United States had considerable stakes in the Arab countries. The investment of capital to build oil industry there was huge. There was a lurking fear of Soviet expansionism and America shared the apprehensions with

179. Truman, n.164, p.138,
180. Ibid., p.140.
Britain. The Truman Doctrine had shifted the care of Western resistance to Moscow from London to Washington. Whether this important departure changed American's attitude towards the Arab countries who had been wedded to the cause of Arab Palestine? The events which followed the submission of that problem to the United Nations suggest a negative answer.183

182. Ibid.
183. Ibid., pp. 71-72.