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Origin of Secular Nationalist Ideology in Palestine and Influence of the Soviet Union's Communism

SUBHASH SINGH
UGC-Post Doctoral Fellow
Centre for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India)

ABSTRACT

After the Russian revolution in 1917, one major earthquake came in world politics that the Bolshevik party destroyed the Tsarist autocracy and established a communist government under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin. Consequently, Bolsheviks created the Soviet Union and tried to spread communist ideology through the world. After this political development, Lenin became more popular and rose as the hero of the Russian Revolution. He also influenced several regional leaders, who were fighting against colonial powers. Therefore, several leaders emerged in the regional politics and followed the Lenin's path to liberate their country from the influence of colonial powers. In this context, Arab communist groups and parties began emerging throughout the West Asian region. Consequently, Palestinian secular nationalism rose under the leadership of Yasser Arafat and created a Fatah movement in 1959 and the PLO in 1964. Both the Palestinian organizations had only one agenda to liberate Palestine from Zionist occupation, which was supported by the United States of America (USA), Britain and France.

Key Words : The Soviet Union, Communism, Secular Arab Nationalism, Palestine, Israel Fatah, Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

INTRODUCTION

Secular Arab Nationalism has been root of the secular nationalist ideology of the Fatah or Palestine Liberation Movement (PLO) since its creation. Central principle of the Arab nationalism is that the peoples of the Arab World, from the Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea, constitute separate nation bound together by common linguistic, cultural, religious, and historical heritage.[1] One of the primary goals of Arab nationalism is the end of Western influence in the Arab World, seen as a "nemesis" of Arab strength, and the removal of those Arab governments considered to be dependent upon Western Powers. It rose to prominence with the weakening and defeat of the Ottoman Empire in the World War I.

During the World War I, one major earthquake came in Russian politics when Bolshevik destroyed the Tsarist autocracy under the leadership of Vladimir Lenin and established the communist regime which in later years led to the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic in 1922. The Tsar was deposed and replaced by a provisional government in the first revolution of February

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1917. In the second revolution, during October, the Provisional Government was removed and replaced with a Bolshevik (Communist) government. The Bolshevik party, led by Vladimir Lenin, and the workers' Soviets, overthrew the Provisional Government in St. Petersburg. The Bolsheviks appointed themselves as leaders of various government ministries and seized control of the countryside, establishing the Cheka to quash dissent.[2] The success of Marxist-Leninist revolutionary ideas to over through the Tsarist rule in Russia inspired the Lenin and his allies to counter the world capitalist system and its hegemony over global order. He started attempting to spread the communist ideologies to bring the socio-political and economic transformation in the world which influenced and attracted the leaders of several countries to follow the communist path. After the October 1917 revolution, the victorious Bolsheviks inherited a strong socio-economic base to build on and were able to add a new ideological dimension to it.

The Bolshevik revolution was initially willingly welcomed by many peoples of the West Asia. The communist revolutionary appeal was, at that time, enthusiastically greeted by many Muslim and non-Muslim people of the world, who saw in it a historic chance for the fulfilment of social and national aspirations which had long been suppressed by the domination of the Colonial powers. The Bolsheviks condemned their underhanded diplomacy toward the Muslim countries.[3] They published a number of secret agreements from within the archives of Imperial Russia's Foreign Ministry, including the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which particularly compromised France and Britain among the Arab population of the West Asia. The Soviet government's appeal of 20 December 1917, signed by Lenin himself, to "All the Working Muslims of Russia and the East" officially declared, "the Arabs, as well as all Muslims, had the right to be masters of their countries, and to decide their own destinies as they wished."[4] The appeals of communist leaders were widely accepted and followed, consequentially several Arab nationalist leaders were also get influenced and started their struggle against colonial powers. Therefore, Communism is ideological root of secular nationalist ideology of Arab World. After the revolution, numerous political parties were formed which were based on communist ideology. The loyalty of Arab communist parties to Soviet Marxist-Leninist ideological and organizational precepts, together with their dependence on Soviet material and political support, renders it necessary to trace their initial foundations in the context of political developments in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

Soon after the 1917 October revolution, the Soviet leaders encouraged Arab and other Asian anti-imperialism or anti-colonial activists to join the popular struggle for national liberation.[5] Reasoning that the achievement of national liberation was possible only through a united effort within the country, the Soviets even contemplated utilizing Islam as a 'cultural movement,' and "the only factor of unity among the Muslims," for that purpose.[6] At that time, they also considered the prospects for extending the struggle for political independence by tying it to the battle for social justice and ultimately the implementation of socialist and secular ideas.[7] Consequently, Arab communists had strong ideological interests and practical involvement in the Arab nationalist movement. As such, then they had an impact on the ideological and organizational shape of Arab politics in the twentieth century, which was on the whole quite disproportional to their direct political role and real strength in the region.[8]

On 19 January 1918, the Soviet government established a Commissariat for Muslim Affairs. A Central Bureau of Muslim Communist Organizations was set up in November 1918 by a regional Muslim congress meeting in Moscow. In November 1919, a Second Congress met in Moscow and passed a resolution calling for the establishment of communist parties throughout the West Asia.[9] According to British Foreign Office reports, within a year of the establishment of the Comintern in

March 1919, Bolshevik propaganda and ideas began to appear in Palestine, and Jewish immigrants established the Socialist Workers' Party (*Mifleget Poalim Sozialistim*).[10] It was, in fact, this party that initiated the formation of communist parties in Syria and Lebanon and influenced the transformation of the Egyptian Socialist Party into the Egyptian Communist Party. In 1920, the Bolshevik government consequently refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of the British-mandated rule in Iraq, Palestine, and Transjordan, and of France in Syria and Lebanon. The egalitarian Treaties of Friendship and Brotherhood – concluded in 1921 by Soviet Russia and the Muslim countries of Turkey, Afghanistan, and Iran – repudiated the very concept of the mandate system. Moreover, the USSR was the first country to establish full diplomatic relations with Hijaz (after 1932 the name was changed to Saudi Arabia) and in 1926 recognized an independent Yemen.[11] It is in this context that Arab communist groups and parties began emerging throughout the region:

– The Socialist Party of Egypt was formed in 1921, elements of which formed the Egyptian Communist Party in 1922. In 1923, the Comintern recognized the Egyptian Communist Party.

– The Spartacus group was formed in Beirut in 1921. In 1924, the Communist Party of Syria and Lebanon (CPSL) were established, and in 1928 the Comintern recognized it.

– The Palestine Communist Party (PCP) was established in 1923 and was officially recognized by the Comintern in 1924.

– In the Maghrib, in 1919, communist parties began as extensions of the French Communist Party.

– The Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) was organized in 1934.

Subsequently, the Third International issued a call to the Muslim peoples to attend a congress, to be convened at Baku on 15 August 1921, devoted to a discussion of their future. From the very beginning, the Iraqi communists in particular were strongly orientated toward a pan-Arabism path. The *Jam'iyat al-Ahrar* (Association of Liberals) published in its 1929 program a call urging that people regard "all Arab countries as one country."[12] Further, its members were bound to oath their loyalty, making an oath upon "the honour of Arabism".[13] At the same time, the communists' pan-Arab political orientation was, at least partly, inspired by Soviet interests in an alliance with the broad popular Arab movement in a common struggle against the Colonial powers.[14] Other Arab communist parties were soon to follow the Iraqis in their support of Arab unity. As early as 1931, the resolution adopted at the conference of the communist parties of Palestine and Syria condemned the division of the Arab world imposed by the imperialist powers after World War I, stating that "these boundaries artificially weaken the masses of the Arab people in their struggle against the foreign yoke for their political independence and national unification in accordance with the free decision of the masses of the people."[15] Both of these parties had a strong connection and therefore closely followed the official Soviet line.

This may explain the parties' hesitant attitude toward becoming involved with the petit bourgeoisie and other national revolutionary groups of the period. Naturally, for all future communist documents on the issue of Arab unity, the statement anticipated its gradual and free voluntary implementation, and assumed both the complete national state independence of the Arab countries involved and that a federal political structure would be established.[16] Probably, the impact of Marxist-Leninist theory and the strong non-Arab ethnic minorities represented in their rank and file, the Arab communists soon showed some doubt and cautiousness toward the grandiose appeals of Arab nationalism.[17]

Nonetheless, a more careful, and even somewhat doubtful, attitude did not mean the denial of the goal of Arab unity that the Arab communists conceived of as an essential tool for strengthening

the national liberation struggle against Western imperialism.[18] Their proposed rule was to "proceed separately but to strike together." [19] Occasional temporary agreements with the Arab nationalist groups for common action were considered permissible "provided their vacillation and inconsistency are criticized, thereby preserving the complete ideological and organizational independence of the communist movement." [20] The communists' participation in the national liberation of the Arab countries was considered by them as a way to achieve a position of leadership of the peasant masses, the poor in the city, and the masses of the petit bourgeoisie. As the resolution stated that hegemony over the working class cannot be realized without a persistent manual struggle for Arab national independence and freedom. There can be no permanent victory for national and political independence without an agrarian peasant revolution, and the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government, at least in the more developed Arab countries namely Syria, Palestine and Egypt. [21] Thus we have seen communist ideology of Soviet Union had huge impact on the Arab Nationalism as well as Palestinian Secular Nationalism led by Fatah/ the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

Origin of Secular Nationalist Ideology in Palestine: Rise of Fatah :

In 1948, with the establishment of the Jews state of Israel, along with the Palestinian migration, the common experience of the Palestinian refugee Arabs was mirrored in a loss of Palestinian identity. The institutions of a Palestinian nationality emerged slowly in the Palestinian refugee Diaspora. Most important milestone that preceded this development was the founding of Fatah in 1959[22] , which consequently emerged as the leading Palestinian organization and the formalization of Fatah's primacy when it assumed the leadership of the PLO[23] . Fatah was the first Palestinian organization to call for a direct armed resistance against Jewish state of Israel. In the initial years and before it had acquired external legitimacy, this was the only way that Fatah could find its place on the regional outline. The practice of violence was designed to provoke Israeli counteraction and to draw Arab states into a conflict with Israel. The armed struggle was also a primary means to mobilize popular support and tried to generate pressure on Arab governments to embark on the war to liberate Palestine.[24] Popular support was further intended to strengthen Fatah's position among other Palestinian organizations active in advancing their own status in a similar manner. The armed struggle did in fact place the Palestinian issue on the regional agenda. It also made a vital contribution to the institutionalization of the Fatah-led PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people because Fatah took over PLO in 1969 when its founder Yasser Arafat was elected as a chairman.[25]

Fatah has not defined its ideology in clear terms. It is opposed to formulating any ideological programme in general, and maintains strict objectivity with regard to the ideological and political conflicts which divide the contemporary society, including the Arab world.[26] Fatah has explained why it has not defined its ideology. It is of the opinion that the Palestine National Liberation Movement (Fatah) "is neither a Party nor a Front. It is simply a movement." "The Party has a fixed social ideology and the Front group organizations within the context of a specific plan of action. The fundamental element of a movement is dynamism. It accepts fundamental principles as well as assumptions but subjects its thoughts to practice and experience. Through motion and dynamism the movement builds its intellectual content."[27] According to Fatah, it has certain basic principles and concepts. Its intellectual content can only crystallize through dynamic and pragmatic experience. Its dynamism is cybernetic. This cybernetic dynamism is essential for the success of an active movement like Fatah. Theory is an outcome of experience and practice is a real test for thoughts and positions.[28] Everything is judged through practice. Fatah through its dynamism translates all its

concepts and policies into practice, modifying and altering them to the point where it can build its intellectual content. Consequently, as a Movement, Fatah refused to be still and cannot define the man of the future through metaphysical reasoning. It thinks that by defining the ideology it may become static which will hinder its growth. It, therefore, wants to be dynamic and to build up its concepts and policies through experience and practice.[29]

Fatah appointed a special committee in 1958 to draft its guiding principles. The summary of the draft is as follows:

– Revolutionary violence is the only available means of liberating the homeland.
– This violence must be exerted by the masses.
– The object of this revolutionary violence is to liquidate the political, economic and military institutions of Zionism over the whole of the territory of Palestine under Israeli control.
– This revolutionary action should be independent of all party or State control.
– This revolutionary struggle will of necessity continue over a long period.
– It is an Arab revolution spearheaded by the Palestinians.[30]

As compared to other Fedayeen groups, Fatah's stand seems to be conservative. It does not make a fundamental break with the past though it has adopted all modern political ideas that suit the prevailing situation-except the Marxist ideology of scientific socialism.[31] There were two wings: "the rightists" and "the leftists'' in the organization. The former was led by Khaled el Hassan and the latter by Salah Khalef. Yasser Arafat was the spokesman of the organization. He acts as an arbiter between the factions.[32] In spite of the charges levelled against Fatah, it is difficult to say that it is fundamentally a conservative movement. It may have followed a conservative policy to win over the conservative elements of the Arab East but its practice has a definite left orientation.

It has implemented the Maoist military strategy of people's war without uttering the name of Mao Zedong. Fatah explained its leftist stand in a very short article called "Fatah and the Left" published in the Fatah**.** It explained its leftism as follows: despite the variegated definitions of the Left in general, it can be safely stated that all genuine leftist movements seek to end man's exploitation of man, start by refusing a given condition or structure and proceed to change it by resistance or struggle and revolt.[33] The apex of struggle is armed struggle. Fatah was more leftist than anything since it intellectually rejects a status quo or a given condition and wants to change it through armed struggle. Within this frame of reference, Fatah accused the Communist Party in Jordan, for instance, of being rightist because it has failed to join the national movement which has taken up arms to change the status quo. Fatah also justifies its leftist stand by citing examples of various revolutionary experiences and how they vary from one another. There are variances in socialist experiences from Yugoslavia to Poland and from Russia to China.[34]

As long as there are such differences over the social content of these experiences and as long as every social contents is certainly changing with time, it is not easy to predict the future and define, outright, a theoretical social content for the Palestine revolution. Even if it has not defined its ideology, Fatah believes that the social content for the Palestinian revolution is bound to safeguard two basic objectives:

– Doing away with man's exploitation of man.
– Implementing social justice.

To blame Fatah of having businessperson inclinations just for not restricting the Palestine revolutionary struggle to the class of peasants and workers is, to say the least, unfair.[35] Those who make such accusations ignore the fact that Fatah represents a peculiar but wider class: the class of uprooted, displaced and oppressed Palestinians. It, therefore, embraces all the Palestinians who

hope for a homeland. Fatah's left orientation is based on the analysis of the Arab situation and the nature of the Palestinian struggle. Its argument is that certain classes which were unknown in the days of Marx have emerged in history. Marx did not study a class called the "displaced persons' class" which has appeared among the Palestinians. Fatah, which never called itself Marxist-Leninist, was the first to practice armed struggle. Fatah claims that actual practice and not words should be the real condition.[36] There were many Marxists in Fatah. Hence to say that Fatah is a "right" organization is to undermine its character in the context of historical situations. Its political orientation may have been influenced by the traditional culture and religious faith which are common in the Arab countries. The "Voice of Al-Asifah"[37] (Fatah Radio) and its Fedayeen communiqués used to start with "In the Name of Allah, the magnificent, the merciful..." but this may be a tactic to win over the Arab masses and to get the financial support of the conservative regimes like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, etc. It may not be a question of strategic compromise (or a long-term compromise) with them. Because whatever Fatah has announced or may announce would be connected with the requirement of immediate stages of the national liberation movement than with long-term strategy.[38] Fatah was of the opinion that it represents a revolutionary movement that does not allow it to be bogged down in the sticky incompatibilities of ideology. Revolutionaries all over the world pin hope in the "cybernetic dynamism" of Fatah.[39] It cannot be criticized on the basis of its present ideological stand which may be short-term tactics. One has to keep in mind that the Palestinian revolutionaries do have bases in several Arab countries. They cannot antagonize the regimes on whose territory they operate. If Fatah officially takes a Marxist-Leninist line, neither can it get the financial support from the Arab regimes nor can it freely operate. It seems that Fatah's line was pragmatic.

Secular Palestine as Fatah's Goal :

Fatah tries to create a secular state in Palestine under the PLO. According to Fatah, every person can live with his/her religion. Therefore, at the fourth session of the PNC, in July 1968, the Palestinian Covenant was amended to emphasize Palestinian distinctiveness within the Arab nation. The changes were drafted and approved with the agreement of the *Fedayeen* organizations and all those attending the PNC meeting.[40] According to the charter of the PLO (1968), Article 1 says "Palestine is the homeland of the Arab Palestinian people; it is an indivisible part of the Arab homeland, and the Palestinian people are an integral part of the Arab nation."[41] Again article 3 states, "The Palestinian Arab people possess the legal right to their homeland and have the right to determine their destiny after achieving the liberation of their country in accordance with their wishes and entirely of their own accord and will,"[42] and that Israel should be eliminated from the region. Judaism, according to the Covenant, "being a religion, is not an independent nationality, nor do the Jews constitute a single nation with an identity of its own; they are citizens of the states to which they belong.[43] The uncompromising maximalism adopted by the PLO in the Covenant represented the consensus among Palestinians and was received sympathetically by the Arab world then led by Nasser. Most Arabs believed that Israel was a barrier in the way of a possible Arab unity. The extensive literature about the conflict published in the Arab world in those days, official and unofficial, emphasized the main lines of the Covenant and the refusal to recognize Israel.

The recurrent emphases of the fourth session of the PNC on the general principles of the Covenant, despite the results of the June 1967 war and the occupation of additional Arab territory by Israel and the defeat of the Arab armies by Israel, strengthened the PLO and its perception by

other Arabs as the representative of the Palestinian people. This made a significant contribution to the increased prestige of the PLO in the world and its recognition as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and as a revolutionary movement waging a just struggle pro national liberation.[44] In parallel to the rising prestige of the PLO, a discussion began in the late 1960s, influenced by the outcome of the 1967 war. In various circles of the PLO and its supporters in the Arab world and elsewhere, about parts of the consensus expressed in the Covenant and in particular the establishment of a Palestinian state and the attitude towards the Jews.[45] The first glimmers of a change were the result of intentional pressure exerted by the PLO to break out into the wider world and expand its support and recognition as the representative of the Palestinian people by states and societies not necessarily Arab or West Asian . This entailed a need to adopt positions that took account of the presence of Jews in Palestine. It placed the idea of "the establishment of a secular democratic Palestinian state after the liberation of Palestine from the Zionists"[46] on the agenda of the Palestinians and PLO; the idea was first floated in May 1968 and adopted officially by the PNC at its eighth session, held in Cairo in March 1971. [47]

The concept of a secular state represented the first step towards recognition of the Jews and their right to equal treatment with the Palestinians. In particular the idea was based on the assumption that "after the liberation of Palestine from Zionist rule" the entity to be established in Palestine would be "an independent and democratic state whose citizens have equal rights, irrespective of their religious affiliation."[48] In their attempts to market this idea, Fatah leaders emphasized the need to distinguish Judaism as a religion from Zionism "as a racist movement that is not appropriate to human identity";[49] in the future Palestinian state, civic equality for the Jews would be conditional on their renunciation of Zionism.[50] The Democratic Front for Liberation of Palestine(DFLP),[51] headed by Naef Hawatmeh, went further than Fatah and recognized that "a Jewish people had been born" in Palestine that was distinct from the other Jews in the world and it would be necessary to take account of this identity in the future resolution of the conflict.[52] In practice, the Democratic Front came very close to the idea of a bi-national state in Palestine, but did not dare advance it as its preferred solution; instead, it continued to advocate a democratic state with "a special link to a united Arab socialist state.[53] While the debate about the secular democratic state was going on, dramatic events were taking place, including the discord between Jordan and the PLO that culminated in Black September (1971) and the expulsion of the *Fedayeen* organizations from their bases in Jordan to the refugee camps in Lebanon. This was a significant development, because it relocated the *Fedayeen* forces to areas without a Palestinian majority and removed them from the centre of Palestinian population in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.[54]

The animosity towards the Jordanian regime and the recognition within the Palestinian national movement of the difficulty of accomplishing a major change in Jordan—whether by overthrowing the regime or getting the current regime to allow *Fedayeen* to return to their bases in Jordan—supplemented by the intensified political efforts after the October war in 1973, ignited a debate within the PLO about the best way forward. A school emerged that supported agreeing in principle to the establishment of a Palestinian entity in any area of the West Bank or Gaza Strip that Israel might return to Arab control.[55] This school was initially spearheaded by Hawatmeh's Democratic Front. Later Fatah adopted the same position, especially after the 1973 Arab summit meeting in Algiers, which recognized the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Fatah supported the idea of setting up a Palestinian entity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on condition that this did not constitute a renunciation of the historic right to establish a Palestinian state in the entire territory of mandatory Palestine.[56] In June 1974, the twelfth session of the PNC resolved the

official adoption of the 'Phased Plan', according to which "the Liberation Organization will employ all means, and first and foremost armed struggle, to liberate Palestinian territory and to establish the independent combatant national authority for the people over every part of Palestinian territory that is liberated."[57]

On the basis of the Palestinian National Charter and the Political Programme drawn up at the eleventh session, held from 6-12 January, 1973; and from its belief that it is impossible for a permanent and just peace to be established in the area unless our Palestinian people recover all their national rights and first and foremost, their rights to return and to self-determination on the whole of the soil of their homeland; and in the light of a study of the new political circumstances that have come into existence in the period between the Council's last and present sessions.[58] The Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization will make every effort to implement this programme, and should a situation arise affecting the destiny and the future of the Palestinian people, the National Assembly will be convened in extraordinary session. This plan was the first step that explicitly recognized reality and the need to deal with it. As such it represented the start of a PLO retreat from its maximalist position as to the geographic scope of the future Palestinian state.[59] For the first time, the Palestinians explicitly accepted the establishment of an entity in only part of mandatory Palestine and not necessarily in all of it. Although they did not yet speak of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, they had nevertheless moved in this direction; the actual reversal took place only after the Lebanon war and the expulsion of PLO forces from that country (1982).

In June 1982, PLO Chairman Arafat expressed support for a plan submitted by Egypt and France to the UN Security Council that called on the Palestinians and the Israelis to agree to mutual recognition and the start of negotiations, with the participation of the PLO, based on Resolution 242 and an assurance of the national rights of the Palestinian people.[60] Consequently, the Palestinian news agency WAFA carried a report to the effect that the PLO recognized all UN resolutions on the Palestinian issue, including the 1947 partition resolution (Resolution 181). These initial steps were backed by an accord worked out between Jordan and the PLO in February 1985, in which they agreed to field a joint delegation to future negotiations in the framework of an international conference, and that this delegation would negotiate on the basis of UN resolutions and the principle of "land for peace."[61] These developments encountered scathing criticism from the Palestinian rejectionists, supported by Syria, but were a significant milestone towards the acceptance of Israel's existence by the PLO mainstream. This sea change, influenced by the expulsion of the PLO from Lebanon after the 1982 war, gained momentum after the outbreak of the Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The popular struggle against the Israeli occupation- the Intifada- began in December 1987. The Intifada confronted the Palestinian national leadership- the PLO- with the immediate need to deal with a new form of struggle and options for resolving it.[62] The Intifada forced the Palestinian leadership to focus on the demand for a Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside Israel. This entailed major changes in the emphases and major axes of the Palestinian national movement and its leadership and led to concrete steps to cope with these changes. The most significant expression of the PLO's change in its attitude vis-à-vis Israel and regional peace was at the nineteenth session of the PNC, held in Algiers in November 1988. This session, proclaimed to be the "Intifada session", approved the Palestinian declaration of independence unanimously; even the representatives of the rejectionist front supported the document. [63] "The proclamation of independence included an explicit article but referred to "UN General Assembly Resolution 181 (1947), which partitioned Palestine into two states, one Arab, one Jewish [and] provides those

conditions of international legitimacy that ensure the right of the Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty and national independence. This wording explicitly recognized the partition resolution and indirectly (but clearly) also Israel's right to exist."[64]

This orientation was clarified in the political manifesto issued by the PNC, according to which the PLO agreed "to participate in an international conference that would seek to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace and would be convened on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, supplemented by the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.[65] The manifesto demanded that "Israel withdraw from all Palestinian and Arab lands occupied in 1967, including Jerusalem. This wording, adopted at the urging of the Arafat-led mainstream, represented a significant step towards clarifying the nature of Palestinian expectations from Israel and for peace. Along with Arafat's renunciation of terrorism, this led to a significant modification in the attitude of the United States toward the PLO and the Palestinians, and paved the way for the convening of the international conference in Madrid on 18 October 1991. At that conference, the Palestinians formed a joint delegation with Jordan, even while making plain the sole responsibility of the Palestinian delegates for negotiations about specifically Palestinian matters.[66]

The head of the Palestinian delegation, selected by the PLO leadership in Tunis, was "Haider Abd el-Shafi",[67] one of the founders of the PLO in 1964 and a well-known personality in Gaza and among the Palestinians in general. In his opening address to the conference he presented the Palestinian position reiterating the Palestinians' desire for peace with Israel based on Security Council resolutions, and the Palestinians' right to self-determination, to be manifested in a state on the West Bank and Gaza Strip that would be confederated with Jordan.[68] After the "Madrid Conference",[69] and on the basis of the discussions and agreements that preceded and followed it, the talks continued in multilateral meetings that considered regional issues, and in bilateral sessions at which Israel and each of the Arab delegations endeavoured to make progress on specific issues. The bilateral talks with the Palestinians were held in Washington and continued intermittently from the Madrid Conference until the Oslo Accords were made known to the media and the negotiators in Washington in 1993. Six rounds of talks were held during this period without producing any significant progress. Even at the sixth round, held after the electoral victory of Yitzhak Rabin and the change of government in Israel, no change was evident in the Israeli position or willingness to move toward the Palestinians.[70] The stalemate in the Washington talks, produced by the inflexibility of the two teams: the Israelis led by "Elyakim Rubinstein"[71] and the Palestinians by Dr. Abd el-Shafi, stimulated both sides to look for other channels, secret or public, in order to arrive at concrete agreements. This became more urgent after Rabin took office, because during the election campaign he had promised to conclude an accord with the Palestinians within 6 to 9 months.

On 19 August 1993, in Oslo, official representatives of Israel and the PLO initialled an agreement whose core was the announcement of principles for achieving peace between Israel and the Palestinians.[72] The agreement became a formal international commitment after the exchange of letters of mutual recognition on 9 September and the signing of the Declaration of Principles on 13 September on the White House lawn, with guarantees supplied by the United States and Russia.[73] The Washington ceremony marked the end of six months of negotiations that had begun as talks between Israeli academics and PLO representatives aimed at investigating options for a peace agreement in light of the deadlocked negotiations in Washington. On the Israeli side, the two chief negotiators were Dr. Ron Pundak of Tel-Aviv University and Dr. Yair Hirschfeld of the University of Haifa, both of them close to then deputy foreign minister, Yossi Beilin, and acting in partial coordination with him.[74] Beilin kept Foreign Minister Shimon Peres briefed on the contacts and on

the flexibility displayed by the PLO representatives with regard to a future peace agreement with Israel, as opposed to the rigid positions presented by the Palestinian delegation in Washington. This flexibility signalled to Peres, and later to Prime Minister Rabin, that Arafat was interested in opening a secret direct channel of talks. They sent the director general of the Foreign Ministry, Uri Savir, to meet with PLO representatives Ahmad Qureia (Abu Ala), Hassan Asfour, and Maher al-Kurd; later they added Yoel Singer, the legal advisor of the Foreign Ministry, to the team. These talks led to the Israeli recognition of the PLO and the signing of the agreement with it.[75]

The mutual recognition and Declaration of Principles opened the way to negotiations between Israel and the PLO, which in turn produced an interim agreement, signed in Cairo in May 1994, which established the PNA in the Gaza Strip and Jericho as the first step toward a comprehensive peace agreement based on UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 383.[76] The Palestinian Authority took shape in May-June 1994 and assumed concrete form with the arrival of Arafat and his entourage from Tunis in Gaza on July 1994. From the Israeli perspective, the agreement with the PLO, including its recognition as the representative of the Palestinian people, was a significant breakthrough that ignited protests by the right-wing and religious opposition[77] . For the government, the agreement was a practical manifestation of Rabin's campaign promise to make peace with the Palestinians against the background of the Intifada on the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the appearance of the first signs of fatigue with the conflict among broad sectors of the Israeli public.[78] The Israelis and their government had also taken note of the increased international insistence, especially by the United States, on the need for a solution in the West Asia, in the light of the radically new world balance of power after the collapse of the Soviet Union. One manifestation of this was the massive support offered by governments in Europe, North America, and elsewhere for a speedy resolution of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. From the PLO's perspective, the agreement came at a very difficult juncture.[79] The Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip had begun to show signs of being weary with the Intifada. The talks in Washington were not producing any significant achievement in the field and to some extent excluded the PLO leadership from the focus of the decision-making process. The Communist bloc, which had consistently supported the Palestinian position against Israel, had collapsed, while the Arab world was in a state of turmoil after the Gulf War.[80] Moreover, the PLO and the Palestinians in the territory had forfeited the support of the Gulf States because of Arafat's support for Iraq during the Gulf War; the severe financial crisis that ensued forced the PLO to shut many of its missions around the world.[81] In the West Bank and Gaza Strip, a strong local leadership began to emerge and showed a preference to assert its independence of the PLO leadership in the Diasporas. Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and collective punishment of the Palestinian civilian population, continued unabated. The agreement was in fact a necessary measure to rescue the PLO leadership from the abrupt termination of its historic role.

Conclusion :

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the reinterpretation of Europe are also showing signs of influencing Arab political culture. At the first level with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the West is not yet providing alternative conceptual forms and appears rapidly in the Arab public as a monolithic, influential, Christian and aggressive institution. It is feared that in the events in Bosnia, the years of the Cold War were a mask that conceals only a deep religious identity, ambitions and prejudices in the clothing of ideology. The East and West labels are coming back in the meaning of the East-Bolshevik-Revolution of the Christian West and the Muslim East. At the second level, increasing

right-wing politics in Europe is strengthening it. In Germany, France and Italy, there has been a rapid rise of ultranationalist parties, which promote open anti-Arab and anti-Islamic policies. With the rise of nationalist, ethnic and religious tensions in Eastern Europe, this rapidly growing pattern of originally rebuilding of identities and events against Arabs and Muslims is already helping in mobilizing for Islamic movements. The fact is that many Western strategists are presenting that after the collapse of the Soviet Union; Islam is the main threat to the West, unfortunately, creating greater distances between the Western and Arab societies, weakening the secularists and strengthening the fundamentalists. Hence secular Arab Nationalists leaders had lost their credibility in world politics and support from the Soviet Union which was reflected in Oslo Accords in 1993.

After the Oslo Accords, there have been tremendous changes in the Palestinian politics. The Palestinian identified themselves as Muslims first and foremost. It is surprising, considering that the Palestinian community is once considered the highest secularism in the Arab world and two decades ago political Islam had a partial role in the Palestinian National Movement. After this new change in Palestine, 80 percent of the young Palestinians are largely frustrated, demonstrating a broad recognition that the future holds little hope for them Hamas's victory in the last Palestinian elections in 2006 was just a fresh indication that the community was looking for answers at the time of despair, corruption and harassment, which was created by the Fatah/PLO. In its venture to change, Palestinian voters turned to Hamas for the hope of a dream for integrity, inclusion and future. Nevertheless, voting shows that many Palestinians liked to become abstracted with Hamas immediately after the election because Hamas failed to fulfill its promises for an integrated Palestinian agenda. Many voices are arguing that the Islamic leadership has failed and religion will not play a role in Palestinian political life.

This secular movement claims that religious groups such as Hamas and radical Jewish groups are responsible for the problem and therefore should end with the political and civil process. But it is true that religious leaders and organizations have added fuel to the conflict, it does not mean that secular leadership is the only answer. On the contrary, religion and the Palestinian community should play a major role in solving the problems faced by them. Although, Islam has been used by many Palestinians to support violence and support corrupt political institutions, people have forgotten that Islam is rich in texts of peace and compassion. The Prophet of Islam refused to fight for 13 years in Mecca, teaching and preaching under oppression and atrocities. Faiths in Palestinian areas where many people are changing religion, belief cannot be ignored and fundamentalists should not be handed over. It should reject the idea that political choices are restricted to religious conservatism or purely secular views.

The Time has come for non-violent movement in the Palestinian community to emerge from mosques, religious institutions and Islamic centres, at least from the expected places. These places are often accused of being the birthplace of violence, but they can also become the birthplace of positive thoughts for the change. Faith-based non-violent movements have revolutionized people in the past and changed the political reality, where it seemed impossible, and can still provide the same answer today. Non-violent methods have already achieved some success in Palestinian villages such as Budrus, where both religious and secular Palestinians had joined hands to oppose the separation barrier, which was ready to walk through their land. His opposition was successful and the road to obstruction has been changed. However, the Palestinian Non-violent Movement is still divided and is mostly secular. It believes that the movement needs a moral and spiritual message of justice which can tie together, and this cannot happen without the religious presence of religious leaders and the religious members of the community.

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