

ROUBEN KARAPETIAN

**THE PLACE AND
ROLE OF SYRIA
IN ARAB-ISRAELI
CONFLICT
1946 – 2000**





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Introduction

It is well known that the Arab-Israeli confrontation is the most old and bloody conflict in contemporary world. And it is mainly due to the interference of the outside powers the Arab-Israeli conflict still remained unresolved for more than 60 years. First of all, the Great Britain and the United States of America, the ex-Soviet Union and different international organizations, numerous European and Asian states, led by the Soviet Union or US, and supporting either Israel or Arab countries. Those states and organizations, despite their official declarations that "their main task is to promote the conflicting sides to find real ways for peaceful, fairly resolution of the conflict", pursue their own political, strategic, regional, military, economic aims, which create additional difficulties and obstacles for its final solution. Thus the bias policy of so called "great" and "super" powers had turned the Middle Eastern drama into tragedy.

Due to its favorable geographical position Syria is one of the most significant political and cultural centers in the Arab as well as Islamic world. It is here that a variety of political ideas and movements were given birth to and brought to life. They have greatly influenced the process of political, economic and cultural development in the Arab world.

Being part and parcel of Arab "umma" (motherland), Syria has, undoubtedly been playing a key strategic role in the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as in establishing peace in the Middle East. For more than half a century, lying in the epicenter of the unyielding struggle in the region, Syria has actively been participating in all the phases of the most long-lasting international conflict.

By 1979 Egypt, owing to its military potential, territory, active leadership and advantageous geographical position, had been considered to be the most important Arab state confronting and counter-acting Israel. Yet, having signed the agreement in Camp David, Egypt lost its leading role while Syria replaced the former in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

If Egypt's withdrawal signified the end of the Arab countries' possibility of fighting against Israel in a successfully conducted massive war, then under the circumstances Syria became the key country without whose participation the establishment of overall and lasting peace in the region is considered to be impossible. Some analysts even exaggeratedly claimed that

from the military viewpoint the conflict has changed its nature since 1979, turning from the Arab-Israeli confrontation into one between Syria and Israel. It is quite natural that one of the most prominent Armenian scholars, Doctor of Historical Sciences Rouben Karapetian had devoted a special monographic study under the title - "The place and role of Syria in the Arab-Israeli conflict (1946-2000)".

Dr. Karapetian had put over his shoulders heavy burden of scientifically presenting for the first time the position of Syria towards the Arab-Israeli conflict which covers the long period from 1946, when the independent state of Syria appeared on the world map, up to 2000 when the reign of Syria's President Hafez Assad was over. It should be emphasized that not every researcher could dare to do it. But for doing that, it is necessary to get a good scientific training, to have hard experience, high level of theoretical background, good knowledge of many languages, etc.

As a colleague, I know Dr. Karapetian through many years which allow me to confirm that he is a professional of high quality with vast knowledge of development of human society, history of the Arabs and World history. He clearly shows the great ability to carry out first-rate scientific research works like this one. His proficiency in many foreign languages, among them Russian, Arabic, English, and so on, had opened before him the closed doors of very valuable sources, documents, scientific literature and other materials, the use of which simultaneously in one study is difficult to find.

Dr. Karapetian is a researcher with own vision on different aspects of history, policy, including foreign policy of Syria and Arab countries, on conflicts and historical events in Syria and Arab world as a whole. All these factors made the monograph necessary and interesting from the point of view of contemporary Arab studies.

With the aim of giving deep insights into Syria's policy toward the conflict, the ideological warp and foundation of that policy the author deemed it necessary to refer to certain crucial issues concerning the rise of nationalist movement in Syria, particularly that of nationalist and pan-Arab ideology. All this is of paramount importance in forming a substantiated and thorough view not only of Syria's modern history but of its domestic and foreign policy as well. The range of such issues supposes new approaches, new interpretations and commentaries, hence new solutions.

One of the important novelties of the research is the analysis of the actual motives of Damascus' foreign policy, carried out in close connection with the internal political processes and regional developments. The research sheds light on Syria's relations with Israel considering numerous internal and external political factors. The effect of the superpowers' policy upon those relations is interpreted in a new way.

Proper attention is paid to the analysis of Syria's policy towards Palestine problem. Various stages and peculiarities of Damascus' position and attitude towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are thoroughly examined.

The cold war waged between the USSR and the USA in the Middle East was reflected in Syria's foreign policy doctrine. Therefore the book presents a detailed picture of not only Damascus' relations with the above-mentioned superpowers but the policy conducted by the latter, the goals pursued by them in the region as well.

One of the major directions of Syria's foreign policy is the development of ties with Arab countries. Hence a study of inter-Arab relations as well as pan-Arab ideological issues is carried out in this research.

It is common knowledge that the principles of Syria's present-day attitude towards the conflict in the Middle East were formulated in the autumn of 1970, in the documents enlarging on the Baath Party program adopted in the course of the so-called "corrective movement". In view of this circumstance the present research is chronologically limited by the year 2000 when the era of Hafez Assad's reign came to an end. The reason for this limitation is the fact that Damascus's attitude towards the Arab-Israeli conflict did not principally undergo any noticeable changes in the course of 30 years and was marked by its consistency and continuity. The governments headed by Assad merely shifted the emphasis on this or that issue, thus adapting the country's current foreign policy to new geopolitical and regional developments. The research pays attention also to Syria's internal issues particularly to a wide range of problems concerning the opposition and economy.

Since 1975 the problem of gaining control over Lebanon has been considered to be crucial in determining Syria's domestic and foreign policy. Taking this into consideration we have tackled not only the essence and actual motives of Syria's policy during the civil war in Lebanon but also the consequences of confirming Pax Syriana after signing Taif Agreement and

the effect of Syrian presence in Lebanon on the process of establishing peace in the region.

The analysis of Syria's political strategy towards Israel enables the author to perceive the peculiarities and subtleties of the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as the perspectives of settling it and establishing peace. It is necessary to pay an attention also at one aspect of this study. Dr. Karapetian carried out his work on Syria as a country, which started to develop, in particular in the period of Presidency of Hafez Assad, very rapidly and dynamically. The principle of evolutionary development is one of the main principals of this study. It had given the author possibility to carry out his research work not on the level of social cataclysms, but as a natural-historical phenomenon. That approach is one of the main achievements of the author.

The present research is based on official documents. The author used the given materials at his disposition very skillfully, using the analytical methodology, always confirming his conclusions and opinions with official documents and other primary sources. The bibliographical and factual framework of the book is completed by the information and other materials the author obtained while acting as Armenia's Ambassador to Egypt and Representative in the League of Arab states as well as during his visits to Lebanon, Syria and Israel when he met with top Arab and Israeli officials and diplomats.

The role of Syria in the Arab-Israeli conflict is considered to be of key importance particularly in the last three decades.

While the problem of Palestine is the "heart" of the Arab-Israeli conflict, from the strategic viewpoint, the policy conducted by Syria and improvement of Syria's relations with Israel are decisive for the final settlement of the conflict. The international community and Israel should realize that it is impossible to settle the problem proper by imposing economic and political pressure on Syria and by attempting to isolate Syria from the peacemaking process.

It is difficult not to agree with the major conclusion drawn in the book: "if years ago (up to 1979) it was said that it was impossible to wage a large-scale Arab-Israeli war without Egypt's participation, now we can state with confidence that to achieve fair settlement of Palestine problem and establishment of firm and lasting peace in the Middle East only by means of Syria's full involvement in the peace process (which will result in the improvement of Syrian-Israeli relations, eventual signing of a peace treaty,

thus depriving Iran of any opportunity of interfering in Arab affairs through Syria). And it will not do to create a "state" of Palestine as a result of Israeli-Palestinian agreement, thus leaving no choice for Syria and making it agree to the terms favorable for Israel".

Undoubtedly, Dr. Rouben Karapetian's study is one of the best scientific research works on history, domestic and foreign policy of Syria, published during the last years. It is a fundamental work and serious contribution to the study of contemporary history not only Syria, but also Arab countries, Arab-Israeli conflict and Palestinian issue.

Professor Nikolay Hovhannisyan
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11.01.2012
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Chapter 1 - Syria and the Origins of Arab-Israeli Conflict

Syrian Nationalism and Zionist Ideology in the Mandate Period 1920-1949

A visitor to Syria may come across political maps on which the borders with Lebanon and Jordan are marked not as "international" but merely as "internal" ones. Israel does not exist on there while Palestine is separated from Syria with a "temporary" border.

The inaccuracies on the map testify to the fact that the Syrian people cannot forget that by 1920 the name "Syria" meant not the territory occupied by modern Syria but also Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Sanjak (Governorate) of Alexandretta "granted" by the French to Turkey in 1939, i.e. the whole territory which is the historic-geographical Syria or "Bilad-ash-Sham".

Naturally Syrian history is closely connected with that of Palestine where since the end of the 19th century the Jews' immigration has started thus preparing grounds for the most long-lasting and blood-shedding conflict – that of the Arab world and Israel.

It is common knowledge that by the beginning of World War I most of the Arab countries, including Syria, had been under the reign of the Ottoman Empire. After the war in April, 1920, having objected for a long time, the supreme council of the Entente held a conference in San Remo and decided to hand the mandate for Syria and Lebanon to France.

From 1920, i.e. from the moment the French mandate was confirmed up to gaining independence on April 17, 1946, Syria was engaged in national-liberation struggle which "stopped being a mere Syrian issue having gained pan-Arab significance"¹.

Within this historical period the political life in Syria underwent different phases of formation and development. Syrian politicians' ideas and approaches concerning the country's future as well as its internal life varied. The same is true for the problems and issues on the agendas of various political organizations set up in Syria and beyond its borders.

¹ N.Hovhannisyan. The Creation of Independent Syria, 1939-1946, Moscow, 1968, p.3 (in Russian).

The purport of the present chapter is to discuss the attitude of the Syrian political elite, in the absence of statehood, towards the historical developments in Palestine. In this regard, it is important to analyze Syrian politicians' views and standpoints concerning Jews' immigration into Palestine and realization of Zionist schemes. With this aim we deem it necessary to briefly tackle the problems dealing with the formation of Syrian nationalism.

Nationalism in Syria can be classified into three stages: Ottomanism (1860-1918), Arabism (1918-1948), Syrianism² (1948-1970) and last but not least Syrian Arabism (1970-2000).

Ottomanism Period

From the start it should be mentioned that we can seriously speak about Syrian nationalism only after World War I, when the ideas on the necessity to creating a separate sovereign unit began to prevail within the Syrian political elite. Although some analysts prefer to call the nationalism in Syria before World War I "Syrianism"³ the term "Syrian nationalism", covering the given period, should be used very cautiously. The name Syria was simply a geographical name for various religious communities and tribes that were led by mere communal, tribal or religious interests and not by the ideas of Syrian Motherland⁴.

However this does not exclude the existence of ideologies of "Ottomanism" and later "Arabism" since the second half of the 19th century⁵.

² Except for the years 1958-1961 the period of uniting with Egypt, when "earthy" nationalism-Syrianism (for safety reasons and other scruples) was subordinated to G. Nasser's Arab nationalism-Nasserism.

³ Kayali, Hasan. Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1918, p. 212

⁴ Arabs formed 90 per cent of the country's population (74 per cent – Sunnis, 12 per cent – Alawis, 3 per cent – Druzes, 9 per cent – Kurds and the rest were Christians – Armenians, Greek, Maronites, etc.) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3580.htm>

⁵ The Origins of Arab Nationalism. Edited by Rashid Khalidi, Columbia University Press, 1991; Dawn, C. Ernest. From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism. Urban, Chicago and London: University of Illinois Press, 1973; Antonius, George. The Arab Awakening. London. 1938; Hourani, Albert, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798-1939. 11th reprint, Cambridge University Press, 2002; Nuseibieh, Z. Nazem. The Ideas of Arab Nationalism. Ithaca, N. Y., 1956; Haim, G. Sylvia. Arab

In Syria the modification of these two ideologies proceeded in the way of phases connected with a number of internal and external conditions and factors.

The development of Syrians' national self-consciousness was greatly influenced by Mohamed Ali's invasion in 1830 and the subsequent years of his son's, Ibrahim Pasha's reign. In those days the progressive amendments made in Syria – stimulation of intellectual and political life, abolition of segregation towards religious minorities – created favorable conditions for the activity of small but active Western Christian missions as well as for the first nationalistic societies which pursued mainly enlightening goals⁶.

In the years of Ibrahim Pasha's reign a lot was improved and this promoted the formation of the national-cultural movement called "Al-Nahda" (Awakening) in the Arab world in the forties of the 19th century.

After 1840, when under the British pressure Ibrahim was compelled to leave the country, the Turks closed down Arab schools and colleges but, fearing the reaction of the West, they allowed the activity of Catholic and Protestant missions. Due to this last circumstance the number and influence of Christian Arabs gradually grew in the country. Christians had the opportunity of attending the educational establishments sponsored by those Western missions, whereas Arab Muslims and Druzes were deprived of the right to attend schools. This was perhaps the reason why Christian Arabs as well as Armenians, being the first to undertake enlightening and preaching activity in Lebanon and Syria, greatly promoted the growth of national self-consciousness among groups of the population and became the vanguard of Arab "Al-Nahda".

It should be mentioned that a number of experts at Arab studies and some other authors attempt to belittle the role of Christian Arabs in the cause of importing progressive Western ideas into the Near East. In particular E. Dawn, A. Nusuli, M. Kurd and others claim that in that period Egypt's state educational establishments were of no less importance and the Muslim

Nationalism. Los Angeles, 1962; Sharabi, Hisham. Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years 1875-1914. Baltimore, 1970; Ajami, Fouad. The Arab Predicament. Cambridge, 1981; Zeine, N. Zeine. The Struggle for Arab Independence. Beirut, 1960; Левин З. И. Развитие основных течений общественно-политической мысли в Сирии и Египте. М. 1972. (Z. Levin. The Development of the main social-political thinking in Syria and Egypt. Moscow, 1972, /in Russian/).

⁶ Such as Syrian Society, Oriental Society and Syrian Scientific Society

nationalist activists originating from Syria and having been educated in Ottoman state schools formed a majority. They also underline the negative role that Western establishments played in the formation of national self-consciousness⁷.

One cannot deny the fact that in this period Egypt was the political and intellectual center of the Arab world. As a matter of fact Egypt's semi-independent status in the Ottoman Empire, the liberal atmosphere reigning there as well as the economy which was relatively prosperous urged progressive Syrians to emigrate not only to Europe but to Egypt as well where they undertook political activity and advocating nationalist ideas. In the conditions founded by Abdul Hamid's merciless regime it was impossible to carry on such activities in one's home country – Syria. So "Al-Mucattam" founded in Cairo was the first daily newspaper to advocate Syrian nationalistic ideas. It was a situation when the major representatives of the Syrian nationalistic movement carried on their activity abroad – in Europe (mainly in Paris) or in Egypt. Christian Syrians founded unions and periodicals in Europe, while Muslim Syrians did the same in Egypt.

Nevertheless it should be definitely stated that the European educational establishments opened in Beirut, Damascus and Aleppo were of exceptional significance in stimulating the "Arab Awakening".

The key goal of "Nahda" movement was to fight against backwardness and obscurantism reigning in the Arab world simultaneously introducing the Arabs to their spiritual-cultural values – the heroic pages of history, science, language and literature. This was to be combined with the introduction of Arab society to the European culture and progressive socio-political thought. Some of the outstanding figures in Nahda movement were Nasif Yaziji and Butrus al-Bustani, Amin Schmeyil, Michael Mshakka, Khalil al-Khoury and others⁸. In the centers of the movement – in Syria, Lebanon and Egypt national schools were opened, newspapers were published, libraries and other educational-cultural centers were founded. It is

⁷ Dawn, C. Ernest. From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essays on the Origins of Arab Nationalism, pp. 159-63, 177; Hourani, Albert. The Emergence of the Modern Middle East, p. 204; 1926/1354; Anis Zakaria al-Nusuli. The Reasons for Arab Nahda (Rebirth) in the 19th century. Beirut, 1926, pp. 21-52, (in Arabic); Muhammed Qurd Ali. The Compilation of the Arabic Scientific Academy of Damascus. 1926, pp. 18-66, (in Arabic).

⁸ Jamal Mohammed Ahmed. Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism, pp. 81-88

impossible to overestimate Christian Arabs' and Armenians' considerable contribution to this movement⁹.

It was on the ideological warp of Nahda that the Arab national-liberation movement subsequently grew stronger, a movement which witnessed various ideological, tactical and strategic manifestations in Syria's political life where Syrian Muslim politicians, undoubtedly, played a leading role.

We should also take into consideration the fact that in 1839, the initial phase of the reformation of the Ottoman Empire "Tanzimat" (Reforms), Britain, France and Russia commenced to interfere with the home affairs of the Sublime Porte more actively taking advantage of the wretched condition in which various religious minorities turned out to be. The Sunni Muslims of Syria, being the majority of the population, were jealous of those religious minorities that enjoyed the patronage of European countries. For instance Britain protected Druzes and Jews, France supported Maronites while Russia protected the representatives of the Orthodox community. All this gave rise to demarcation lines between various national and religious minorities inhabiting Syria. "Bilad ash-Sham" consisted of numerous "close communities" which were governed by their own religious, national, language and tribal unwritten laws. Consequently, a united Syrian national unit was not to be found in Syria in that period. The rivalry among the members of the elite, the incompatibility of interests and goals pursued by communities hindered the formation of a powerful national movement in the country.

It should be proper to separate two major factors which stimulated nationalistic movement in Syria.

The first factor is the gradual increase of the Western influence and the active impact of Western culture and civilization.

A lot of historians ascribe the appearance of Arab nationalism only to Western penetration into the region, the permeation of Western civilization. We have already spoken about the role of Western missions and educational establishments in the cause of the realization of nationalism.

It goes without saying that the ideas of national ideology, those of nation and home-country emerged in the Ottoman Empire as a result of the

⁹ Հովհաննիսյան Ն. Հայ-Արաբական պատմական արհեստները, էջ 28. (N.Hovhannisyan. Armenian-Arab historical links", 2008, p.28, (in Armenian)).

active penetration of European countries. The relations between the Orient and Occident were not at all in favour of the former. The Western world with its advanced science and technological innovations inspired respect on the one hand and it aroused a feeling of injustice and even insult in the people of the East on the other hand. Only a few centuries before the East used to export advanced science and cultural values to the West - whereas in the middle of the 19th century the same East had to bow before the West, before its might, the high level of its technology and social life. The military failures and the gradual collapse of the Empire merely deepened that sentiment in the political elite of the empire.

As for Arab intellectuals and politicians, they began looking for the secrets of the Western civilization's progress and development. Explanations varied: some assigned their backwardness to the decrease of the role of Islam and its values: others tried to substantiate it by the shortage of such concepts as home-country, patriotism and nationalism. The necessity of restoring pure Islam in the society as a means of improving the government, eradicating corruption, granting certain liberties was put forward. Arab intellectuals attempted to adapt the ideas of Islamic modernism to Arabism (Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Muhamed Abdo, Rashid Rida, Abdel Rahman al-Kawakibi). Some orientalists tend to consider Islamic updating to be the foundation and source of Arabism¹⁰.

There are also other viewpoints in regard to this matter. For instance, Hisham Sharabi and Bassam Tibi claim just the opposite emphasizing the secular origin of Arab nationalism, its ideologists and pointing to the activity of some Christians such as Najib Azuri, Amin al-Rihany and others¹¹.

Though Syrian intellectuals and public activists considered themselves to be Arabs and took pride in Arab culture and historical legacy, they had not yet matured politically to realize the necessity of gaining independence and founding a national state. However, it is worth mentioning that as far back as in 1868 Ibrahim al-Yaziji appealed to Arabs "to restore their past glory" and free themselves from the Turkish yoke. In 1870 in Beirut there appeared slogans calling for a rebellion and demanding Syria's independence together with Lebanon. Yet these were only separate incidents

¹⁰ Cf. The Origins of Arab Nationalism in Rashid Khalidi (ed), The Origins of Arab Nationalism, p. 10

¹¹ Sharabi, Hisham. Arab Intellectuals and the West: The Formative Years, 1875-1914, pp. 98-101; Tibi, Bassam. Arab Nationalism: A Critical Inquiry, pp. 61-79

which were not perceived by Arab masses and, naturally, they did not have any continuation politically. Until 1908 the Arab nationalistic movement, on the whole, was not organized, the only exception being the "League of Arab Motherland" founded by Najib Azuri in Paris 1904 (Ligue de la Patrie Arabe).

As for the concepts of "vatan" (home-country) and "vataniya" (patriotism) we have to admit that Ottoman patriotism and the devotion to Ottoman home-country prevailed. Some organizations on literary basis were founded, such as "Arab Awakening" (Al-Nahda al-Arabiya) in Constantinople in 1908, "Literary Club" (Al-Muntaba al-Adabi) in Cairo in 1909. As a counter-action to the young Turks' program of Turkification the organizations "Ottoman Decentralization Party" (Hisb al-Lamarkaziya al-Usmaniya) in 1912 and "Arab Ottoman Brotherhood" (Al-Ikha al-Arabi al-Usmani) in 1908 and some others were set up which supported amendments, autonomy for Arabs within the Ottoman Empire. **The second factor, which greatly influenced the development of nationalism in Syria, is the policy of "Turkification" carried on by young Turks.** The sheer vanity of the ideas of "equality" or "improvements" within the Ottoman Empire and the impossibility of realizing these ideas became evident for the Arabs because of this factor. Certain Syrian politicians spoke out about Syria's independence and the necessity of creating an Arab state. This tendency grew stronger during World War I.

Nevertheless, the majority of Syrians welcomed the young Turks' revolution in 1908, carried away by the progressive mottoes put forward by the young Turks.

But the latter had adopted a mean and cunning policy concerning the ethnic communities living in the empire. The Arabs were not an exception. At first they made an attempt to flatter the Arabs as long as the Turks cherished some hopes to realize the policy of Islamism or Ottomanism. Later, adopting Turkism - the plan of Turkifying the country artificially - as the central idea of their internal policy young Turks openly tried to involve the Arabs in various unions and organizations such as "Turk Ujaksi" (Turkish family), "Turk Yordi" (Turkish Motherland), etc. While the Turkish press began to speak about the danger of Arab national self-consciousness¹², Arab clubs and organizations were closed down, Arabs lost their jobs, Arabic

¹² Haddad, George, Fifty Years of Modern Syria and Lebanon, pp. 41-43

correspondence was banned, Arab *valis* and *mutasarafs* were replaced by Turks.

Some time had already passed since the revolution and the sheer essence of young Turks' policy of Turkification had become obvious. Most of the Syrian elite, though split up because of their own political ideas and preferences, began to bias towards the ideas of Syrianism, the necessity of Syrian independence and founding a national state. But it should be observed that not all the national activists shared these ideas. Proceeding from this A. Hourani singles out the organization "Al-Fatat", set up in Paris in 1911, which, despite considering independence its ultimate goal, demanded only "complete rights for the Arabs and decentralization within the empire" at the first nationalistic congress in Paris, in 1913¹³.

As for those Syrian activists, who were in favour of changing the political status of Syrian and gaining independence, they were not unanimous concerning the means of achieving that goal. Some of them thought that they should rely on the support of powerful states, while others were for counting on their own forces. Their visions of Syria's sovereignty in future were not alike either. The point was whether Syria was to be a completely sovereign state or a self-governing monarchy within a federation with the empire.

It would not suffice to overlook the objective obstacles which attended the development of Syrian nationalism. The ethnic communities inhabiting there did not yet think in terms of a single country. They considered themselves not to be Syrians but Sunnis, Alavis, Kurds, Druzes, Ismailis, Jews, Greek, etc., their attitude to one another was tolerant enough. The majority of the population spoke Arabic, yet this fact was of trifling importance for national unity. The leaders of the country while choosing their priorities were guided not by Syrian national interests but rather by communal and religious differences. Thus, while the majority of the Syrian population composed of Sunni Muslims did not "feel that Ottoman Turkey's government was alien to them, Alavis, Druzes, Ismailis had other sentiments"¹⁴.

Philip Khoury remarks in his valuable research that the Muslim population in Syria supported the idea of remaining within the Ottoman

¹³ Hourani, Albert. Syria and Lebanon. A Political Essay, p. 40

¹⁴ Nikolaos van Dam. The Struggle for Power in Syria. Politics and Society under Assad and the Ba'ath party, p. 2

Empire and they even considered Mecca's sheriff Hussein's rebellion "to be an act of betrayal" whereas the Christian subjects of the country mostly supported the idea of independent Syria¹⁵. The superpowers conducted policy of "divide and rule" thus hindering the formation of unified national ideology in Syria. Britain, France and Russia pursuing their geo-political goals "defended" the interests of various religious and ethnic minorities, thus, deliberately or not, sowing mistrust and even hostility among those communities. This last circumstance not only gave rise to "minority complex"¹⁶ in those communities but also resulted in "a state which way not a national state, and a political unit not being a politically unified community"¹⁷ after gaining independence in 1946.

Although the Syrians witnessed the young Turks, mean policy towards them, suffered years of horror and massacre in the years of Jamal Pasha's reign and during World War I, we can state that up to 1918, i.e. the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Syrian political elite remained loyal to the ideology of Ottomanism or, because of the unbearable conditions, they had to reconcile with the objective reality, considering other problems to be their priorities.

Considering all this we can regard the period of 1860-1918 to be a phase of the rule of Ottomanist ideology in the Syrian political life. We can speak about the "Arab nation" only after World War I when Arab nationalist movement acquired an organized political nature.

Period of Arabism

The change from Ottomanism into Arabism occurred owing to a few external factors: growing mistrust towards the West (especially after signing the Sykes-Pico Agreement and Balfour Declaration), the establishing of French mandate for Syria and later turning the issue of counter-acting the Jews in Palestine into a general Arab problem.

¹⁵ Khoury, Philip. Urban Notables and Arab nationalism., p. 78

¹⁶ "Minority complex" is first referred to by French orientalist Jacques Veuleresse in his book "Paysans de Syrie et du Proche-Orient", Paris, 1946

¹⁷ Cf. Moshe Maoz. Society and State in Modern Syria, in Menahem Milson (ed.), Society and Political Structure in the Arab World, pp. 29-91; Moshe Maoz. Attempts at Creating a

The mandate system tempered Syria's national leaders and helped them to mature and turn the problem of political independence into one of the items on the agenda. Here we agree with Michael Barnett, an American historian, who finds that Arab leaders began "to initiate, adapt and accumulate the symbols of Arabism in order to legalize their authority, at the same time using those symbols mainly in the struggle for independence and statehood, and this struggle bearing the name of Arabism promoted the process of deepening and legalizing of Arabism itself".¹⁸

Another factor which stimulated the fast development of Arab unity and nationalist sentiments was the British policy and realization of Zionist schemes in Palestine. As a result of massive re-settlement of Jews in Palestine and implementation of plans of founding their own independent state gave a fresh impetus to the Arab national movement demonstrating a new advent especially after the rebellion in 1936.

As a matter of fact a third no less important factor – Jewish immigration and implementation of Zionist plans in Palestine – was added to the above-mentioned two important factors, i.e. the penetration and active interference of the West and the policy of Turkification pursued by young Turks.

If Arab enlighteners, referring to their self-consciousness based on history, language and culture, glorious past, awakened the Arabs' national and this self-consciousness was jeopardized by the young Turks, then the realization of Zionist plans endangered the perspective of having an independent state. One cannot fail to agree with the following statement: if the policy of Turkification jeopardized the Arabs' "cultural status quo", then the realization of Zionist schemes jeopardized their "political status quo".¹⁹

The struggle against Zionism expanded in Palestine was identified with universal anti-imperialist struggle in the Arab world. The increasing number of political clubs and organizations as well as the Arab press developing day by day, promoted the process of turning Palestine problem into a pan-Arab issue.

Formed almost simultaneously, yet developing independently and in different ways Zionism and Arabism collided in Palestine initiating an

Political Community in Modern Syria. *Middle East Journal*. Vol. 26, No 2, Spring 1972, pp. 123, 125-126

¹⁸ Barnett, M. Michael, *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in regional Order*, p. 62

¹⁹ <http://www.geocities.com/martinkramerorg/ArabNationalism.htm>

inexorable and merciless struggle which subsequently turned into the most lasting conflict in modern history – the conflict between the Arabs and Israel. The struggle expanded within and outside Palestine involving all the countries of the region thus becoming not only a pan-Arab but also an international issue on the agenda, an issue, which has not been resolved so far. World War I became crucial for both ideologies. Both the Arab world and the Jews tried to take advantage of the war in order to realize their national ambitions.

Having lived in the backward Ottoman Empire for centuries and having no political experience at the end of World War I, the Arabs turned out to be incapable of effectively confronting the realization of Zionist schemes in Palestine. Due to the absence of a united political leadership the Arabs relied on the vague promises made by the British (Hussein-McMahons' correspondence) and consequently they remained deprived of sovereign statehood. Meanwhile the Jews, making purposeful use of their lobby in London²⁰ and obtaining the initial and most important document for the realization of their scheme from the Minister of Foreign Affairs Arthur James Balfour²¹, years later, succeeded in founding their sovereign state of Israel. And what was the reason that from the very start London supported the Zionists' idea of founding the "Jewish national home" in Palestine?

First of all, "the patch of Jewish land" in Palestine might have a serious strategic significance for Great Britain in order to secure a regular communication through Egypt to India. Balfour's above-mentioned letter-declaration came out at a moment when it was obvious that the Ottoman Empire, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria were being defeated, when the problem of dividing the Ottoman territories with France was quite evident and Balfour Declaration within this framework, seemed to determine beforehand the fate of further governing Palestine.

²⁰ Chaim Weizmann's efforts in this direction are worth mentioning (Chaim Weizmann was the leader of the Zionist movement, President of the Zionist Organisation and the first President of the State of Israel). It is often said that his ability of convincing the British authorities is the only victory in the history of diplomacy which was gained without using force.

²¹ On November 2, 1917, in his letter addressed to W. Rothschild, the president of the Zionist Federation, Britain's Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour, officially expressed the positive attitude of his government towards the idea of founding "a national home" for the Jews in Palestine.

There are two more reasons, less commented upon, for such a letter to be published by the British government. First, making this step, the British government was, perhaps, trying to flatter not only the Jewish community in Britain but also those scattered all over the world. For instance, London hoped that the Jews living in Russia would make efforts to keep Russia involved in the war. Those holding this view even remark that if the October Revolution had taken place merely a few days earlier, that document would hardly have seen light. Britain, being involved in the war, needed the material support of the Jewish community living within the country²².

Twenty years after the publication of the declaration Britain's Prime Minister Lloyd George writes: "The Zionists kept their promise to promote the victory of the Allies. Now the question is whether we are ready to respect our promise"²³.

The second reason is the following: Lloyd George, who became Prime Minister in December, 1916, was a deeply religious person and was sure that the Jews, undoubtedly, had the right to resettle in their historical native country – Palestine. Moreover, he supposed that the Jews' return to Palestine was the realization of God's will. Without any exaggeration we have just to take into account the above-mentioned fact which in its turn also positively influenced the realization of Zionist plans.

Due to Lloyd George's and the succeeding Prime Ministers' (N. Chamberlain and W. Churchill) such "benevolent" policy it became possible to realize the Jews' massive immigration into Palestine within two decades and consequently to found the state of Israel on May 15, 1948. In 1930-s, when the danger of this immigration and the perspective of instability in the region became quite obvious, London made some attempts to check and restrict the immigration. But it was already too late. World War II and the Holocaust stimulated this immigration, while the Jews' open struggle against the British presence in Palestine made the latter leave the country and submit

²² Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End all Peace. The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, pp. 276-284.

²³ After World War II the USSR greatly contributed to the creation of the state of Israel. See «Советско-израильские отношения. 1941-1953» ("Soviet-Israeli relations. 1941-1953" /in Russian/; Млечин Л. Особая папка. Иосиф Сталин-создатель Израиля. (Mlechin, L. Special File. Joseph Stalin – the founder of Israel. /in Russian/).

the problem of Palestine to the newly established UNO. This will be elaborated on in the next chapter²⁴.

During World War I, needing of the Arabs' help, London skillfully made use of Arabs' anti-Turkish and liberation sentiments and by false promises persuaded them to start an armed struggle against Turkey. In reality neither Britain nor France had an intention of founding an independent Arab state.

Moreover, while Hussein, Governor of Hejaz and Sharif of Mecca, was actively corresponding with McMahon, chief British Commissar in Egypt (from July 1915 till March 1916)²⁵, London consented to the idea of an independent Arab state, expecting some changes in the borders. Almost simultaneously, from November 1915, till May 1916. Britain and France were conducting secret negotiations on dividing and colonizing territories belonging to the Arabs.

These events resulted in concluding the well-known "Sikes-Picot" Agreement according to which France was to control the vilayet of Adana, the Syrian-Lebanese seashore, the whole territory of present-day Syria as well as District of Mosul (Iraq) rich in oil. The latter was returned by the French to the British in 1918. According to the agreement the British were to control the eastern part of Mesopotamia while the western part and the territory of present-day Jordan were declared to be zones of British influence. Palestine was placed under international control and only the ports of Haifa and Acre were handed to Britain. It should be mentioned that the agreement was confirmed by Russia as well, hence the north-western part of the Ottoman Empire, Constantinople, the western shore of the Bosphorus, the Marmara Sea, the Dardanelles and some Black Sea coastal areas were handed to Russia. The agreement did not overlook the interests of Greece and Italy either which took possession of the small section of Smyrna in the West of Anatolia and the whole southern part of the empire respectively.

²⁴ The decoded archive materials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR confirm that the Soviet Union had a hand in founding the State of Israel after World War II. See "Soviet-Israel relation. 1941-1953". Млечин, Л. Special File. Joseph Stalin – the founder of Israel.

²⁵ Woodward, L. Ernst and Butler, Rohan. *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, First Series*, vol. 4. London, 1952; Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sharif Hussein of Mecca, July 1915 March 1916. London, 1939; Report of a Committee Set Up to Consider Certain Correspondence between Sir Henry McMahon and the Sharif of Mecca in 1915 and in 1916. London, 1939.

According to the plan of the superpowers only the Arab Peninsula was to be granted independence under the leadership of Hashemites. Germany also pursued certain goals in the Near and Middle East, first of all in Egypt as well as in Mesopotamia and Syria.

Naturally, the bitterest enemy of the Arab countries was the Ottoman Empire. Being a member of the German-Austrian bloc Turkey meant not only to suppress the national-liberation struggle of the Arab countries but also to preserve the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and its domains in Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Arabia, to invade Egypt and go further into the Transcaucasus, the Crimea, Povolzhie, Turkmenistan, as well as North and Central Africa. In short the Arab countries did not have any possibility of liberation irrespective of the fact which side would win the war.

Nevertheless, the above-said did not at all mean that the Arabs had given up struggle active against the Turkish yoke. Alongside with the Turkish failures on the front the anti-Turkish activity of Arab nationalist organizations was strengthening. Arab soldiers were unwilling to fight for Turkey and massively deserted the Turkish army organizing partisan detachments.

Syria, like other Arab countries, being part of the Ottoman Empire, was also involved in World War I.

The war worsened the economic situation in the country. Foodstuffs and cattle were impounded from peasants for military purposes. Thousands of peasants were forcibly sent to work on buildings of defensive nature. In a number of places people suffered from starvation. Only in Lebanon because of "the actual embargo imposed by Turkey 150 thousand people died of famine and destruction during the war"²⁶.

In the course of World War I the authorities of Turkey, taking advantage of the situation, tried to resolve the ethnic problem by using military forces and by means of complete extermination. Armenians and Arabs were the first to fall victim to this monstrous policy. In 1915, realizing the genocide of 1.5 million Armenians, the young Turks proceeded to settle accounts with Arabs a year later. Turkish criminals, sure that the Arabs were ready to separate, by an armed rebellion, from Turkey, thus gaining independence, committed a number of merciless terrorist acts in some Arab countries.

²⁶ Haddad, George. Fifty Years of Modern Syria and Lebanon, p. 47

Jamal Pasha, who had taken active part in the genocide of the Armenians, was appointed commander of the Turkish troops in Syria only a few months after the Armenian genocide. He founded courts martial in Syria which executed those Arab activists who were members of nationalist clubs and organizations or had political links with them. The first victim was hanged on April 6, 1916, and a month later 21 Arab leaders were hanged, 7 of them in Damascus and 14 in Beirut.

The Arabs, who were unaware of the existence of the "Sykes-Picot" Agreement, rebelled in June, 1916, in order to shed the yoke of Turkey finally. Hussein's sons Ali and Faisal declared the Arabs' independence in the name of Hussein in Hamza, near Medina, on June 5, 1916. The Arabs' century-old dream of freeing themselves from the Turkish yoke seemed to come true.

But Britain did not keep the promise given to Hussein. He was not informed of the agreement between Sykes and Picot though after signing the agreement the latter visited Jedda to see Hussein a year later. And it is not clear how the events would have developed if the Bolsheviks hadn't made the text of the secret agreement which came to be known after the October Revolution.

Jamal Pasha hastened to take advantage of the situation, though in November, 1917 he appealed to Hussein to abandon the unreliable Europeans and join Turkey promising to grant the Arabs complete autonomy after the war. Assured by McMahon's representative R. Wingate that the text of the agreement had been misinterpreted and that Britain was willing to change certain articles in favour of the Arabs, Hussein again trusted the British. Surprisingly enough, Hussein did not even demand to see the text of the agreement which was meant to serve the interests of Britain and France at the expense of the Arabs' independence²⁷. Moreover, A.J. Balfour, Foreign Secretary of Britain was well-informed of the fact that France would never consent to change the agreement in favour of the Arabs. He also knew that they were not going to abandon Iraq. As for Palestine, Balfour was to issue his declaration.

This declaration caused abrupt upheaval in the Arab world. But again assured by the British that "the creation of a national home for the Jews

²⁷ Nutting, Anthony. The Arabs. A Narrative History from Mohammed to the Present, p. 291

was to correspond to the political and economic liberty of the Arab population", Hussein set his sons and other Arab leaders a task to cooperate with Britain and to pacify the Arabs as well as to help persecuted Jews to find shelter in Palestine.

Balfour himself went on pacifying the Arabs. In March 1918 Weizmann left for Cairo and Jerusalem where he tried to convince the leaders of Egypt and Palestine that the Jews' immigration into Palestine would in no way trample on the Arabs' rights. In June the British Foreign Office declared that the territories of Hejaz and Transjordan which had been liberated by the Arabs would be granted "complete and sovereign independence"²⁸. As for the territories of Palestine and Iraq, which had been liberated with the help of the British, they would be governed according to the will of the people. Those countries which had not yet been liberated, i.e. Syria and Lebanon, would have to fight for their liberation and independence.

Finally, in November 1918, after Turkey had surrendered, the British-French joint declaration was issued, according to which those two powers were planning to create such administrations in Palestine, Syria and Iraq "that would be vested with power as a result of the free realization of the local population's initiative and election". In fact the declaration abolished Sykes-Picot deal, and Syria, Iraq, Palestine and the Arab Peninsula were given a chance to elect their governors. But this was only written on paper. As a matter of fact, the governments of Britain and France intended to divide those countries between themselves. It became known immediately after Faisal turned up in Damascus. A British civil and military government was formed in Jerusalem and Baghdad, the French undertook Lebanon's and north-western Syria's governing while the Arabs were given the central part of Syria and Transjordan from Aleppo to Aqaba. Protesting against the plan of dividing the Arab territory in the way contrary to the promises made earlier, Faisal left for Paris and London. Receiving a cold welcome in London Faisal left for Paris where the peace summit meeting was to be held.

In an atmosphere of mistrust and rivalry between them France and Britain ²⁹ refused to acknowledge Faisal as the representative of the Arabs and therefore they did not negotiate with him. The only agreement gained

²⁸ *ibid*, p. 293

²⁹ The British tried to obtain Mosul District rich in oil, while the French felt deceived by the British after Balfour Declaration.

between Faisal and Clemenceau in November 1919 was the recognition of the Arabs' authorities in the territory between Aqaba and Aleppo (including Damascus) and the formation of a commission consisting of Arab representatives which was finally formed but it consisted only of Americans and it is known as "King Crane's Commission".

This commission carried out its mission with a sense of responsibility and suggested that temporary mandates should be foreseen for Syria, Palestine and Iraq. They held the view that the mandates for Syria and Palestine should be given to the United States, while the mandate for Iraq was to be Britain's, as for the problem of the monarch, it was to be settled by plebiscite. As for France, the commission did not recommend giving any mandate to France taking into consideration the fact that there were strong anti-French sentiments among the Arabs. The commission supported the realization of limited and gradual immigration of Jews in order to create "a Jewish home" in Palestine. However, the provisions stated by King Crane's Commission remained unfulfilled because of Britain's and France's claims and continuing rivalry.

Meanwhile Faisal returned to Damascus where joining "Al-Fatat" and "Al-Ahd" he set up the Party of Arab Independence. In 1920 the latter held the "Syrian General Congress" during which Faisal was declared King of the "Syrian United Kingdom". The Congress abolished Balfour Declaration and Sykes-Picot Agreement and turned down any kind of French dominance. The Syrian Congress was followed by a similar gathering in Iraq where the leaders of the country declared Iraq an independent country headed by Abdallah. France and Britain qualified these decisions as invalid and criticized them severely.

On April 25, 1920, the peace summit was held in San Remo where the superpowers divided the Arab territories to pieces. Britain got Palestine and it also expanded the mandate for Iraq, including Mosul District. France got the whole territory of Syria and Lebanon. San Remo summit deprived Faisal and the Arabs even of the part of Syria including Aleppo and Damascus given to them during the post-war division as well as promised to them by France's Prime-Minister Clemenceau only 5 months before.

As a result of this geo-political "big game" the Arabs suffered a heavy defeat thus tasting the bitter fruit of the "big stick policy" and their own weakness. From then on the Arabs had to rely only on themselves.

The situation in Syria and Iraq was like this. Trying to make amends Britain appointed Faisal King of Iraq. In the unequal struggle going on afterwards, unable to regain Syria with insufficient forces, Abdallah had to accept the emir's status in Transjordan under the British mandate. While Hussein, not possessing enough foresight in his policy, not only worsened his relations with the British government but was involved in a war against Ibn Saud's wahabbist detachments as well. After suffering heavy losses Hussein, being in poor health, yielded his post of Sharif to his elder son Ali.

As far as the Syrian political elite is concerned, before World War I its representatives were concerned about preserving their own wealth and economic positions. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire meant unpredictable consequences for them. They were not yet ready for an independent status, hence maintaining the Ottoman Empire was considered to be favourable for them. Faisal himself admitted that in general the Syrian Muslims accused him and his family "of the destruction of the Islamic (Ottoman) Empire"³⁰. And no wonder that at the end of 1918, Lawrence of Arabia sent a secret message to London in which he wrote that "a voluntary anti-Ottoman rebellion in Syria was impossible"³¹.

The Sunni Muslims, who were a majority in Syria, were determined to remain within the Ottoman Empire but they strongly emphasized the Arab origin of Islam and demanded the cultural and religious authorities to be composed of Arabs. This viewpoint was changed because of the young Turks' policy when, after the war, completely disappointed at the Turkish nationalists, the country's Sunni Muslim leaders spoke of the necessity of gaining independence.

Here we must mention the fact that Syria was rather a geographical name than an actual political unit. Furthermore, it was almost impossible for Syria to have a united political leadership and to adopt a common policy in the name of national goals if we consider the multi-faceted religious, clannish, tribal kaleidoscope existing in the country. If we add to this the well-known local rivalry among the Syrian nobility, such as Damascus and Aleppo on the one hand and Homs and Hama on the other³², it will be clear

³⁰ Walid Muallim. *Syria in 1918-1958*, p. 78 /in Arabic/.

³¹ Dawisha, Adeed. *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century. From Triumph to Despair*, p. 38

³² According to E. Dawn "the pre-Baath" political field in Syria was divided between two alliances - that of Damascus and Hama versus that of Aleppo and Homs. Later the former

that denominational differences resulted in political disconnection, which, in its turn, greatly hindered the process of working out a common national agenda and realizing it effectively³³. As Adeed Dawisha remarked to the point, "the existence and rivalry of different identities in most cases was much stronger than the Arab national identity"³⁴. The interests of various clans and tribes did not always coincide with the wider Syrian national interests.

This was what happened in the short period of Faisal's reign. When Faisal was fighting for Syria's self-governing the Maronite community was absolutely against the creation of an independent Syrian state and in favour of the country's federal and democratic status under the French mandate³⁵. The supporters of this political view were united in the Central Syrian Committee (Le Comité Central Syrien) which was founded by Shukri Ghanem living in France. While in Damascus the members of "Al-Ayan" (rich landlords' and merchants' organization with a political and economic reputation) fought side by side with the French against the Arab army and even welcomed the French as their liberators when the latter entered Damascus³⁶. As for the Sunni Muslims, they were divided into pro-Egypt and pro-Iraq groups, which connected the solution to all the interior and external political problems with Iraq's or Egypt's interference.

And what kind of position concerning the Zionist schemes and the Jews' immigration into Palestine did the Syrian nobility, political activists and representatives of ethnic minorities hold? This problem has least of all been enlarged upon by Arab and Western researchers.

Although in 1904 Najib Azuri already predicted that the Arab and Zionist nationalist movements were doomed to be unyielding rivals, initially the Arab circles and particularly Sharif Hussein of Mecca were benevolent

joined with the opposition of Aleppo and Homs and formed the National Party while the latter set up the Popular Party together with the opposition of Damascus and Hama. See Dawn C. Earnest. *The Foreign Policy of Syria. Diplomacy in the Middle East. The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, pp. 163.

³³ *ibid* pp. 160-161

³⁴ Dawisha, Adeed. *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century. From the Triumph to Despair*, p. 44

³⁵ Zeine Nur ad-Din Zeine. *The International Struggle in the Near East and the Birth of Two States - Syria and Lebanon*. 1958, pp. 153-155/in Arabic/.

³⁶ Bazi Naji abdel Nabi. *Syria - Polarization Struggle. Study and Analysis of the Near East and International Relations*. 1975. pp. 78-84 /in Arabic/.

towards the Jewish immigration and the Zionist scheme of creating a Jewish home in Palestine. Certain events such as the Zionists' meeting with the representatives of "Muntada al-Arab" (Arab Club) (Syrian activist Faris Khoury included) in 1911, the representative's of the Zionist organization in Constantinople Sami Rosenberg's, initiation to the Arab Congress in Paris in 1923, the meetings of the latter with the Syrian side, the meetings of the Zionist leaders Sokolov and Usikhin with the Syrian nationalist activists Jamil Mardam and Abdel Rahman Shahbandar³⁷, testify to this position.

Later, at the end of the war in 1918 when the young Turks' promises of Arab self-governing evaporated completely, the Arabs undertook meetings with the Zionists in order to discuss the possibility of creating a common front against Turkey³⁸.

So in March, 1918, in the official newspaper "Al-Qibla" Hussein appealed to the Arabs of Palestine to receive the Jews from Europe "as their brothers"³⁹. In June, 1918 negotiations between Ch. Weizmann and Emir Faisal (later King) were held in the vicinity of Akaba. These negotiations resulted in signing the historic agreement on January 3, 1919. Some historians resort to this evidence to underscore the fact that at the initial stage the Zionist plan was considered to be "not imperialist but national" and thus it was approved of by the Arabs⁴⁰. The agreement signed by Faisal dwelt not only on the tribal and historical ties of the two nations but on the "development" of an Arab state in Palestine and Jewish Palestine as well.

Does it mean that Faisal consented to Balfour Declaration and the creation of a "Jewish national home" in Palestine? What underlet Faisal's tolerant policy?

It must be admitted that Faisal was the first politician who related the necessity of Syria's independence. Moreover, he made great efforts to realize it. World War I was creating a new rearrangement of forces in the sphere of international relations, and in a situation when the collapse of the Ottoman Empire was unavoidable, European powers – Britain and France, that were going to divide the Middle East between themselves, turned into

³⁷ Maoz, Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, p. 1; Mandel N. J. The Arabs and Zionism before World War I, p. 141.

³⁸ Kimche, Jon. Palestine or Israel: The untold story of why we failed, 1917-1923: 1967-1973, pp. 45-48.

³⁹ Maoz, Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, p. 2

⁴⁰ W. Laqueur (ed.), The Arab-Israeli Reader, pp. 17-21

Faisal's major enemies. As for the Jews, they could be practical allies for Faisal in his anti-imperialist struggle for independence.

Nevertheless, being allies did not at all mean that Faisal gave up the idea of Syria's independence and was going to yield Palestine to the Jews. In this connection it is worth mentioning A. Tibawi's article published in a British journal in which the author touches upon the interference of Lawrence of Arabia in the realization of Zionist schemes in Palestine and the problem of ensuring the Arabs' positive attitude to it. Lawrence acted as interpreter in the talks between Faisal and Weizmann at the peace congress in Paris. Lawrence definitely took advantage of his role to make it serve his benevolent attitude to the Zionist scheme. As a proof Tibawi mentions Faisal's annotation attached to the agreement written in English. The annotation was the translation of Faisal's note written in Arabic. Though the recognition of "Arab independence" was mentioned as a pre-requisite for signing the agreement Lawrence deliberately left it out in the text handed to Weizmann⁴¹.

It was this mistranslation that the Zionists took as a basis to claim that the Arabs had consented to Balfour Declaration. Faisal's statement in the journal "Jewish Chronicle" on October 3, 1919, absolutely refuted the Jews' above-mentioned claims. When asked about the Arabs' attitude to Balfour Declaration Faisal answered in the following way: "Though we cannot speak about the future, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia are indivisible, and we Arabs, cannot give up part of our kingdom – Palestine. As a matter of fact, we are going to fight to the end for Palestine to be part of our kingdom and for the Arabs' rule to be set up in this land"⁴².

It must also be mentioned that the "Syrian Congress", which included representatives of Lebanon and Palestine as well, under the auspices, of Faisal, supported Great Syria's independence. At the very first sitting held on July 1, 1919, anti-Zionist attitudes were distinctly formulated and the Zionist schemes as well as Balfour Declaration were refuted⁴³.

⁴¹ A. L. Tibawi. T. E. Lawrence, Faisal and Weizmann: The 1919 attempt to secure an Arab Balfour Declaration. Royal Central Asian Journal. Vol. LVI, Part II, June 1969, pp. 156-163

⁴² Interview with Faisal. *Jewish Chronicle*, October 3, 1919, pp. 25-28.

⁴³ Maoz, Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, p. 3.

French Mandate for Syria

After a short period of political independence Syria turned up to be under the French rule. In Syria's modern history the 24th of July, 1920, is mentioned as the end of the first phase of independence⁴⁴.

The French mandate was established in 1920, and from then on up to April 17, 1946, Syria was engaged in such a national-liberation movement which "outgoing Syrian circles acquired pan-Arab significance"⁴⁵.

During the mandate period the Syrian nationalist activists' position towards the events and developments in Palestine was greatly conditioned by the cooperation of pan-Arab and local Syrian nationalism, the relations with big powers, by the rivalry between Britain and France as well as economic and financial circumstances.

A lot of authors from America and Israel adduce numerous examples in their researches testifying to the Syrian leaders' tolerant standpoint towards the Zionist plans⁴⁶. They substantiate this standpoint by the fact that the Syrian leaders, through cooperation with the powerful Zionist movement, strove to urge London to prevent France from undertaking Syria's mandate and later obtain Britain's support to realize the plan of "Great Syria" (mainly in the 1930-s).

It is impossible to deny the fact that in the multi-faceted Syrian society some representatives of the minorities⁴⁷ approved of the Jewish immigration into Palestine⁴⁸. For instance, in June, 1936, six Alawi

⁴⁴ Haddad, George. Fifty Years of Modern Syria and Lebanon, p. 67

⁴⁵ Hovhannisyan, Nikolay. The Creation of Independent Syria, 1939-1946, Moscow, 1968, p.3 /in Russian/.

⁴⁶ Maoz, Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking; Porath, Yehoshua. The Emergence of the Palestinian Arab Nationalist Movement; N. J. Mandel. The Arabs and Zionism before World War I.

⁴⁷ The Arabs form 90 per cent of the population (among them 74 per cent Sunnis, 12 per cent Alawis, 3 per cent Druzes and others). <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3580.htm>. Armenian-Syrian connections, which are part and parcel of the Arab-Armenian political and historical-cultural relations, originated in the remote past and underwent different stages. The fates of the Armenians and Arabs crossed once again during the reign of the Ottoman Empire and on the disastrous days of the Armenian genocide in 1915 Syria gave shelter to many thousands of Armenian refugees. The Armenian community was gradually formed with a national administration, cultural and sport structures, schools and newspapers. Today about 150 thousand Armenians live in Syria.

⁴⁸ The Arabic-speaking *Maronites* lived in Syria as far as in the 7th century following monotheism according to which Christ preserved his two natures – divine and human –

nationalists sent a letter to the French Prime-Minister in which they expressed their international solidarity with the Zionists' activity in Palestine: "These kind-hearted Jews have brought peace and civility to the Arab Muslims, they have spread prosperity and gold in Palestine without doing any harm or taking anything from anybody with force"⁴⁹.

Yet it should be emphasized once again that those events and individuals did not represent the whole political elite in Syria – the elite which severely criticized the Jew's massive immigration and did not tolerate the Zionist plans. The Syrian nationalists were not able to make practical steps but in their speeches and newspapers they continually criticized the Zionists and their way of acting in Palestine.

We should also take into consideration the fact that during the mandate period Palestine problem was not considered to be a priority in Syrian policy – it was considered inferior to a more important issue – that of struggling against France's mandate and gaining independence. For this reason the most reputable "National Alliance", founded in 1928, adopted the

which were polarized in one and only one will. The founder of their church is the Assyrian Saint Mar Maron. Being persecuted by Byzantinism the Maronites find asylum in the mountains of Lebanon in the 10th century. They establish close ties with the Vatican in the period of Crusade, at the same time preserving their rites, ceremonies and the patriarch system. Eventually the Maronites acknowledged the Pope's rule in the 17th – 18th centuries. The *Druzes* are followers of one of the sects of the Shiya community. the denomination was established in Cairo in the 10th century. The Fattimide Caliph Al-Hakim declared himself God. After the Caliph's death his followers were persecuted and one of vizirs, after whom the sect was named, found shelter in Syria where gradually increased the number of his followers. The Greek and Indian philosophical thought greatly influenced their concept. The Druzes' first amiradom was founded in mountainous Lebanon in the 12th century. There the areas populated by Druzes either directly obeyed the Druze amiradom or were connected with it economically or otherwise. The scarce information about the *Alawi* community is explained by their tradition to preserve secrecy concerning their religious concept and intra-communal affairs. There are more than 30 tribes forming 12 per cent of the population – more than one million people. The principal factor uniting the Alawis is the religious concept of Nusairi. Their traditions, holidays and rites have been influenced by Ghuran, Tora, Gospel and even by paganism. The major source of the faith is Islam since Nusairism appeared in the second half of the 9th century as a sect of extreme Shia Islam. The basis of the faith is the thesis of the "divine trinity" – Ali, Muhamed and Salman al-Farisi. Ali, i.e. "ain" is the divine meaning, i.e. God and everything originating from him. Muhamed, i.e. "mim" is the name of God who created Salman-al-Farisi. The one who separated these three is considered to be a heretic. The Alawis inhabit the north-western part of Syria and on the Mediterranean coast.

⁴⁹ Pipes, Daniel. Is Damascus Ready for Peace. "Foreign Affairs", Vol. 70, Iss: 4, 1991, pp. 36-52.

motto "Syria first" and led by the principle of "honorable cooperation" in order to conclude a political agreement with France on the one hand, and to gain Britain's diplomatic support against France on the other hand, checked anti-British sentiments in the Syrian society, sentiments which were connected with the policy conducted by the British in Palestine.

However, Syrian politicians did not consider the fact that irrespective of the rivalry between the two superpowers, France and Britain, in the Middle East (this rivalry gave the Syrians an opportunity to use it in their favour) when the problem concerned military interference, these superpowers would rather maintain their mutual relations than act in favour of "their regional partners", particularly it was important to preserve those relations when the problem concerned the exchange or division of territories in the Middle East and it was possible to come to an agreement without using force⁵⁰.

Thus, in the mid-1930-s it became obvious that the policy of the "National Alliance" had ended in deadlock. It was then that the representatives of the middle class, having prospered owing to social-economic, cultural and other structural changes in Syria, unlike the traditional nobility, began to put forward pan-Arab problems, especially that of Palestine which acquired a more up-to-date significance. The newly emerged movements which were more radical than "the National Alliance" had an effect on the nationalist policy. They were eager to alter nationalism so that it would pay more attention to the social and economic activity of masses. They would rather emphasize pan-Arab unity than old nationalist constitutional mottoes, parliamentary forms and individual liberties⁵¹.

It was the representatives of this generation that criticized "the National Alliance" and founded "the League of National Actions" in 1933. The League enjoyed a good reputation among young people. The League paved the way for other nationalist parties, especially for the Baath Party. It played an important role in popularizing and spreading Arab nationalist ideas⁵². Nevertheless "the League of National Actions" and "the National Alliance" were those political units in Syria, which in 1930-s, publicly spoke

⁵⁰ Brown, Carl (ed.), *Diplomacy and the Middle East*, p. 162.

⁵¹ Khoury, S. Philip. *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*, pp. 626-627

⁵² Dawisha, Adeed. *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century. From Triumph to Despair*, p. 80.

about the Jews' increasing immigration into Palestine, supported the interests of the local population and active struggle against Zionism.

In 1936 the situation in Palestine grew critical. The Arab population went on strike, which grew into a massive rebellion lasting for three years⁵³. These events influenced the consciousness of those masses of Arabs who lived outside Palestine, thus transforming Palestine into a pan-Arab problem.

The Syrian political elite was concerned about the increasing Jewish influence and the perspective of destabilization in Palestine. First of all, besides being the reason for Arab solidarity, Palestine was considered to be the indivisible eastern part of "Great Syria" or "Bilad ash-Sham". Secondly, the perspective of a Jewish state in the immediate vicinity posed geo-political threat to Syria and hindered the realization of Arab unity. Thirdly, as a result of the penetration of the Jewish capital into Palestine industry, towns and ports developed swiftly and this seriously weakened the position of the Syrian businessmen.

In defense of the Palestinian cause demonstrations and strikes were organized in Syria, anti-British and anti-Zionist booklets were published. The Syrians did their best to help the Palestinians materially, they organized money-raising, collecting gold items, and they also sent ammunition to Palestine⁵⁴.

In fact, shifting the Palestinian problem into a pan-Arab issue, the Syrian political elite strengthened its position under the pan-Arab banner and it received a powerful impetus for pan-Arab ideology adopted previously.

Taking various authors' opinions into consideration we can state that the permeation and active advocacy of Arabist ideology became possible for the following reasons:

First, Arabism in Syria was necessary for the reigning elite as the latter justified their existence by this ideology. Declaring themselves leaders of the Arab struggle Syrian leading politicians indirectly connected themselves with the Arabs' past, present and future.

Secondly, Arabism made it possible for its leaders to consolidate various segments of the population pursuing different religious, tribal and

⁵³ In that period three thousand Arabs, two thousand Jews and six hundred British subjects were killed. Cleveland, L. William. *A History of the Modern Middle East*, pp. 252-253.

⁵⁴ Khoury, S. Philip. *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945*, pp. 542-544.

local goals. Certainly, Arabism was unable to put an end to the differences between them, but it was capable of wiping off political dispersion.

Last but not least, Arabist ideology was a powerful argument in the struggle for Syria's independence⁵⁵.

We should not forget that the Arabism of 1920-1948 in Syria was of anti-colonial, anti-imperialist nature. As a number of authors state, under the circumstances of past history, dispersal and machinations of powerful states, one could not expect the Syrians to be able to conduct national-liberation struggle led by mottoes of Syrianism. When most people do not connect their identity with Syria, when they are inclined to connect it with a certain tribe, village or religion, it is difficult to demand that they should fight for "Syria's" independence. In such a situation when the traditional resources of governing and sovereignty are rather weak, it was Arabist ideology that was able to create a united political field and raise the banner which was to lead the people in the struggle for independence⁵⁶.

It is necessary to remark that some historians do refer to the existence of Syrianist ideology in that period⁵⁷. It must be noted that pure "Syrianism" was not a ruling ideology for the simple reason that Sykes-Picot Agreement, Balfour Declaration, the summit in San Remo and finally the invasion of Alexandretta Sanjak by Turkey deprived "Syrianism" of serious legal grounds thus making the propaganda of the unification of geographical Syria and creation of a single state in that area meaningless. Thus, Sykes-Picot Agreement, for the first time, drew new political demarcation lines inside Syria. We can say that the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine put an end to the declarative "Syrianist" ideology shaped in the way understood by one of the well-known national activists Antoun Saada and his followers.

⁵⁵ Shlaim, Avi, *Collusion Across the Jordan: King Abdullah, the Zionist Movement, and the Partition of Palestine*, p. 26; Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism*, pp. 79-81; Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate*, pp. 40-41; Zeine Zeine, *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Western Diplomacy and the Rise and Fall of Faisal's Kingdom in Syria*, pp. 65-72.

⁵⁶ <http://www.ciaonet.org/book/barnett/> Barnett, N. Michael. *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order*. Ch. 3 The Creation of "Arab" Politics, 1920-1945; Hopwood, Derek. *Syria: 1945-86*, p. 1; Batatu, Hanna. *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, p. 13; Wilson, King Abdullah; Malik Mufti, *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq*, chaps. 2 and 3.

⁵⁷ E. Dawn mentions two types of Syrianism – "Ottoman Syrianism" and "Arab Syrianism". Dawn, C. Ernst. *The Foreign Policy of Syria. Diplomacy in the Middle East. The International Relations of Regional and Outside Powers*, p. 160.

The "Syrianist" ideology acquired *practical* features only after Syria gaining independence.

In a situation when the concept of "vatan" (homeland) was obviously gaining weight in newly-independent Syria, the leaders of the country had to admit the necessity of Syrianism and the priority of maintaining the independence of Syrian state institutions⁵⁸, even in a situation when Syrianism collided with the populist propaganda of Communist ideology, Antoun Saada's Syrian nationalism and that of creating "Bilad ash-Sham". Syrianism was unavoidable as long as the imperative of strengthening Syrian independence was vital, despite numerous internal and external challenges. Though certain trends of Arab unity (language, culture, etc.) were noticeable in the Arab world, almost all the newly independent Arab countries preferred "nationalism of their countries" to that of "pan-Arab nationalism"⁵⁹.

In the case of Syria an important factor should be taken into account – from the point of view of national security Syria was in a most vulnerable situation. Iraq and Egypt were in constant struggle for ruling Syria⁶⁰. The superpowers did not miss a single opportunity to impose control over Syria. Not yet a political unit of full value, Syria tended to solve its security problems by means of a third power, first of all USA (H. Zaim, A. Shishekly), then of the USSR (Khalid al-Azm), later by means of uniting with Egypt (Sh. al-Quwatli).

After gaining the independence the adherents of Arab unity, Arabism inside Syria began to realize how ineffective and devoid of perspective was the attempt to consider the interests of their own country inferior to Arab unity. This occurred after their defeat in the first Arab-Israeli war, then after two failures in uniting with Iraq and finally after the collapse of a short-lived union with Egypt. It was patent that the priority was given to Syrianism as a means of defending the sovereignty and independence of the country.

Afterwards, the victory of the "Baath" party under the slogan of "Unity, freedom, socialism" in 1963 and seven years later Hafez al-Assad's

⁵⁸ Khalid al-Azm's *Reminiscences*, volume 2, Beirut, 1971, p. 220 /in Arabic/.

⁵⁹ Е. Примаков, *Конфиденциально: Ближний Восток на сцене за кулисами* (вторая половина XX-начало XXI века). Y. Primakov. *Confidential: Middle East on the Scene and Behind* (second half of the XX –beginning XXI century), p. 53 /in Russian/.

⁶⁰ Seale, Patrick. *The Struggle for Syria. A Study of Post-War*

"corrective movement" started the triumphant march of "Syrian Arabism" in Syria's political life.

Creation of the State of Israel and the Newly-Independent Syria towards Palestine Problem

World War II basically changed the geopolitical picture in the Middle East accelerating not only the process of gaining independence by Arab countries but also the realization of the Jews' century-old dream to create their own state. The Holocaust during that War made the creation of the Jewish state urgent necessity. Holocaust was the second huge crime against humanity in the 20 century after the Armenian genocide which took place in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey in 1915-1923⁶¹. The failure from the part of international community to punish the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide and brought them to justice made possible later to Hitler to say. "Be merciless toward Jews. Eliminate all of them. Who now remembers Armenians!" and to exterminate the Jews. The latter's succeeded in creation of their independent country in 1948, Armenians by losing major part of the homeland established their own only in 1991.

Thus not only the public sympathies and the need to provide a secure place for the nation which survived Holocaust worked for the benefit of the establishment of the State of Israel, but also the diligent, hard work of the Jewish organizations led by Zionist ideology as well as the Jews' well-organized lobbying activities. If before World War II Zionists' efforts had been directed towards one of the mightiest colonial superpowers – Britain, then, after the war, being well-aware of the changing correlation of forces and the process of the formation of a bipolar world-order in the arena, bipolar Zionists turned to the United States. There, owing to the Jews' effective propaganda, the majority of Americans were overwhelmed by pure human

⁶¹ Armenian population was fully uprooted from the western part of its ancestral homeland /Eastern Anatolia/. As a result of the "elimination plan" carried out by "young turks" 1.5 million Armenians were massacred, other part of the nation was dispersed throughout the world. Today Armenian Diaspora accounts more than 7 million people with majority of them settled in Russia, United States, France and other countries of Europe and the Middle East.

sympathy and feeling of "responsibility" for the Jewish people and for the survival of the state of Israel.

We should not forget that the Soviet Union also made a major contribution to the creation of the state of Israel, though Soviet historiography kept silence for a long time with regard to it. L. Mlechin, a Russian author, observes that J. Stalin's role in the creation of the state of Israel was crucial⁶².

Although the causes of Arab-Israeli conflict is not in the aims of this study but a quick look at some of the details could be useful for evaluation the position of Syria and understanding the motives of its policy in that period. The roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict go back to the remote biblical period. In studying the history of that conflict one should know that the Jews were almost completely banished from Palestine in the reign of the Roman Empire. For centuries Palestine remained the emotional center of Zionism and the Promised Land for the Jews. The first advent of Jewish immigration into Palestine occurred at the end of the 19th century as a result of Jewish persecutions in Europe. Theodor Herzl⁶³, the leader of this ideology, substantiated the existence of the united Jewish nation and the necessity of unifying the Jews in the land of their ancestors under the circumstances of constant anti-Semitism. All over the world Palestine was declared Jews' "spiritual and national center" and Zionists called it Land of Israel (Erets Israel).

In 1897 the first Zionist Congress was held in Basel (Switzerland) where the so-called "Basel program" was adopted. According to it practical measures were to be taken with the aim of creating a "Jewish home" in Palestine. The Zionist World Organization was founded at the congress.

After the talks with the Ottoman authorities concerning this plan had failed, Zionist leaders turned to European powers asking for help to colonize Palestine. With this aim they first relied on Germany which had been getting ready for the re-division of the world since the end of the 19th century and considered Palestine to be an important strategic region. But very soon the

⁶² "Советско-израильские отношения. 1941-1953"; Млечин Л. Особая папка. Иосиф Сталин – создатель Израиль. Mlechin, L. Special File. Joseph Stalin – the founder of Israel. /in Russian/

⁶³ Theodor Herzl (1860-1904) was an Australian journalist who did not even remember his Jewish origin until Dreyfus case. His ideas are mainly included in the work published in Vienna in 1896 "Jewish State – Modern Attempt to Solve the Jewish Problem".

Zionist leaders changed the direction of their activity and tried to obtain the assistance of Britain which also showed interest in Palestine.

During World War I the number of Jews living in Palestine was only 55 thousand, i.e. eight per cent of the population of 700 000. The Arabs formed 92 per cent out of whom Muslims formed 4/5 part and the rest were Christians.

On November 2, 1917, by the Balfour Declaration⁶⁴ Britain promised to support the Jews to found a "national home". Then in April, 1920, the Peace Congress held in Paris decided to hand the mandate for Palestine to Britain, and this decision was eventually ratified by Paris and London in San Remo. Thus, the promise made in written form by the British to create an Arab independent state vanished.

British eminent diplomat and expert at Arab issues Anthony Nutting, remarks that in the course of the first five years of the British mandate for Palestine the Arabs, on the whole, were complaisant towards the Jews⁶⁵. And this happened in a period when the mandate authorities were conducting an obvious pro-Jewish policy (in the British Colonial Office Arabs were replaced by Jews, etc.) while the Jews declared at the conference in 1920 that the goal of Zionism was not to create a "Jewish national home" but to establish an independent national state.

The Arabs' relative complaisance towards the Jews was interpreted by the fact that H. Samuel was appointed Highest Commissioner of Britain's government in Palestine. "Being the first Jewish governor in Palestine after an interval of two thousand years and an ardent supporter of the Zionist dream to settle three million Jews in Palestine, he was quite fair in the cooperation with Arabs and never showed his friendly attitude to the Zionists. Otherwise how could one explain the fact that in March, 1928, when a Zionist commission arrived in Palestine to set up ties between the Jews and the British mandate authorities, the Arabs calmly continued watching the Jews raise their banners and sing their national anthem in public"⁶⁶.

⁶⁴ British Minister of Foreign Affairs Arthur James Balfour's letter addressed to Walter Rothschild – the representative of the Jews in Britain. See the text in Appendix 1. Stein, Leonard. *The Balfour Declaration*, London, 1961; Sanders, Ronald. *The High Walls of Jerusalem: A History of the Balfour Declaration and the Birth of the British Mandate for Palestine*. New York, 1983.

⁶⁵ Nutting, Anthony. *The Arabs*, pp. 315-318.

⁶⁶ *ibid*, pp. 317-318.

The Arabs' relatively complaisant attitude towards the Jewish immigration at the initial stage can be also explained by their confidence in their quantitative superiority on the one hand, and on the other hand, by the fact that the old Jew inhabitants of Palestine objected to the creation of a Jewish state.

Nevertheless, to state that the Arabs generally tolerated the Jewish immigration, the Jews' purchase of vast lands and settling down there would contradict the historical truth. The Arab population of Palestine was, certainly, worried about the Jewish immigration on which the British authorities had defined a quota – 16500 people annually.

In April, 1920, massive demonstrations of protest were held in Jerusalem, which continued several days and their leader, Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husayni escaped to Syria while the British colonial authorities sentenced him to 10 years' imprisonment⁶⁷. As a result of these protests, in 1921, the immigration was stopped until W. Churchill, Minister of Colonial Issues, clearly defined the British government's policy in 1922. A document was published on behalf of the minister which, in particular, read: "The irresponsible statements that Britain intends to create a wholly Jewish Palestine are not realistic and do not correspond to Britain's actual goals. The thing is not to turn the whole of Palestine into a Jewish national home but to create such a home in Palestine".

By 1931 the Jewish population in Palestine had increased twice and formed 17 per cent of the total population. The number of the new Jewish settlers was 170 000. The Arabs were worried about the fact that such vital problems for Palestine as that of immigration and lands, were at the disposal of the Jewish Agency. Although the mandate authorities tried to make some steps towards the solution to those problems, they yielded to the propaganda expanded by the Jewish Agency in the US, Europe and Russia. In order not to be accused of anti-Semitic position, the British authorities had to allow the Jews to act in a way which was favourable, convenient for them.

In 1933, when Hitler came to power, as a result of persecutions, the Jewish immigration into Palestine grew thrice – from 10000 to 30000 per year. In 1934 the number reached 43000 and 1935 – 62000.

When the Jews formed 30 per cent of the total population, the mandate authorities at last realized that they were to take measures in order to

⁶⁷ Nevertheless, H. Samuel allowed him to return to Jerusalem a year later.

protect the Arab population. The British government declared that the Legislative Council of Palestine would be formed on the basis of proportional representation. This was in favour of the Arabs who formed the majority of the population, but it jeopardized the realization of the Zionists major plan – creation of a Jewish state. Jews openly criticized this approach and after heated debates at the British Parliament the adoption of the government's proposal failed mostly due to Churchill's pathetic speech.

The Arabs were again deceived. In April 1936, the organization Arab Higher Committee was set up which was to conduct the Arabs' struggle in Palestine. It is worth mentioning that the Jews founded the Jewish Agency to defend their interests in 1921. The organization of the Arab Higher Committee was late for 7 years which can be regarded fatal for their cause.

Mufti of Jerusalem Hajj Amin al-Husayni was elected President of the Committee and at once declared a general strike on the whole territory of Palestine. The Arabs threatened to continue the strike until the British government banned the Jewish immigration completely. Simultaneously the Arabs had made certain steps against the telephone, road and railway systems. Although the British ignored the Mufti's demands they were unable to ignore the subsequent acts of violence and mass protests.

The British government once more tried to trigger the Arabs' attention by diplomatic means declaring the creation of the Royal Commission which was to deal with the situation in Palestine. This step made by the British was effective. The strike which lasted for 6 months was stopped after the appeal of the Arab Higher Committee under the pressure of Transjordan's Emir Abdullah and other Arab leaders.

Yet the Arabs made a blatant strategic error. Learning that the mandate authorities had drawn another schedule of the Jewish immigration they decided to boycott the Royal Commission's activity. There could not be a more illogical, more unrealistic, more ineffective decision. The Commission arrived in Palestine, met with hundreds of British people and Jews, as well as *some* Arabs by the end of the visit.

The result of this visit was the final report of the Commission which was of extremely pro-Jewish and anti-Arab nature. The report considered the Arabs' complaints to be illegal while their demands to create self-governing institutions were qualified as "unpractical" in mandate conditions. At the same time it proposed to divide Palestine into two parts – Jewish and Arab. Everybody is aware of this report. But a circumstance is frequently forgotten

– the Jews forming 30 per cent of the population were given 60 per cent of arable land in Palestine. Galilee in the North, Esdraelon (a rich region) in the West were passed to the Jews while the Arabs were to own wild Samaria and the desert districts of Negev.

The Arabs, indignant at such policy of Britain declared a war against them and the Jews. Hajj Amin al-Husayni threatened to execute the Arabs, who would agree that Palestine should be divided. In September in answer to the British District Commissioner's assassination by Arabs, the British authorities started a series of punitive acts against the Arab population in Palestine. First and foremost, the British military units deployed in Palestine were strengthened, death penalty was introduced for those who kept arms and ammunition, the activity of the Arab Higher Committee was banned, many of its members were arrested or banished. Despite these measures, taken by the British and the heavy losses (in 1936-37 one thousand Arabs and 82 Jews were killed) the Arabs continued their struggle in Palestine.

In April 1938, after 18 months' bloodshed Britain had to send another commission to Palestine. Once more the division of Palestine was proposed. This time the Jews were given the coastal plains while Galilee and Negev were left under the constant British mandate. As for the Arabs they were thus separated from the Red Sea by Negev, having only Samaria and the desert sector of Gaza at their disposal.

No wonder that the Arabs met this plan of the British again with hostility. They demanded that the mandate authorities should completely stop the immigration of Jews into Palestine and form a representative system of the Arab government. The Jewish agency, in its turn, rejected the demand and refused to limit the immigration. The Agency started forming military units meant to struggle against the Arabs. Meanwhile the Jews began to undertake illegal immigration as a result which about 35 thousand Jews immigrated without the mandate authorities' permission.

The struggle between Arabs and Jews gradually intensified. The British found themselves in an unfavorable situation in Europe when Munich was followed by Czechoslovakia's invasion by Hitler. It was necessary to settle the situation in Palestine in order to secure, to the utmost, the strategy of realizing the defense of the Suez Canal.

At the beginning of 1939 London became the venue for a conference participated by Palestine Arabs, Jewish Agency and other Arab countries. It was quite predictable that the conference would not arrive at any practical

result. The Arabs demanded independent Arab Palestine where all the rights of the Jewish minority would be guaranteed. The Jewish delegates, from the start, excluded any solution that would decrease the possibility of creating a Jewish state in Palestine. One can understand such a position: millions of pounds were invested in Palestine to buy lands in Palestine and build settlements the number of which had reached 250. If in 1920 the correlation of the Jews and Arabs was one to twelve, in 1939 already it had grown to be one to two with a population of half a million Jews.

In May 1939, the British government announced its own version to settle the problem. This significant document is known as "White Paper". Unlike the mandate, the White Paper acknowledged the Arabs' rights to create an independent government and defend themselves from Jewish immigration and land purchase. Admitting that their policy had been inefficient and unfair the British thought that the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine would contradict their promise made before as it would lead to humiliation of the Arab population, their language and culture. They suggested the idea of a ten-year transitional period after which Palestine was to become a two-nation state whose government would be composed of Arabs and Jews in a way, which "would ensure protection of the vital interests of each community". With regard to immigration official London proposed allowing 75 thousand Jews to enter Palestine within the next five years after which all the problems connected with immigration were to be agreed upon directly with the Arabs. The British Higher Commissioner was to have the right to prohibit land purchase by Jews in certain parts of Palestine.

The White Paper can be considered to be great success for the Arabs. In the course of twenty years the British government admitted for the first time, in public, the rights of the Arab majority in Palestine. Yet this document appeared too late. The British were too late to realize all the complexity of the situation in Palestine created by themselves and its irretrievable negative consequences.

If the Jews and Arabs had accepted the Britain's suggestion and agreed to create a two-nation state, it would have been possible not only to avoid bloodshed and wars after the creation of the state of Israel, but also to turn it into a source of progress and development in the Near East, Palestine being the most developed country in the region with a powerful intellectual potential.

In 1939 it might have been possible for both the Arabs and the Jews to live together peacefully if the leaders of both parties had been willing to compromise. But it is regrettable that they sharply rejected the British proposals each of them trying to control the whole of Palestine.

None of the Arab politicians was capable of settling the problem at a time when they still had the advantage of majority, with the correlation of two to one.

World War II made Britain focus on the European front while the "White paper" remained unrealized.

Despite the relatively peaceful relations among the Arabs and Jews Zionists began to struggle against the British presence in Palestine after they had realized the irretrievable nature of the British "checking" policy toward their scheme. They undertook training of armed groups simultaneously carrying on terrorist acts against high British officials in Palestine (British Minister-Resident Lord Moyn's assassination, the assassination attempt upon the life of Palestine's Higher Commissioner Harold McMichael).

After the war Zionists doubled their efforts to control Palestine and to ensure international support to realize this goal. The crime against the Jews carried out by Nazi Germany created a favorable international atmosphere for Zionists to create a Jewish state in the end.

On February 17, 1947, Ernest Bevin, the Britain's Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared "Her Majesty's Government does not have the power to hand Palestine either to the Arabs or to the Jews or to divide it between the two. Therefore we came to the conclusion that the only way out is to submit this problem to the United Nations"⁶⁸. On May 15, 1948, Britain announced of its intention to withdraw its forces from Palestine. Up to a certain date the newly- founded UN had to look for means and ways to settle the Palestine problem. At that time two versions concerning Palestine's future were being discussed in international circles. According to one of them the country was to be divided into two parts - a Jewish state and an Arab state. This was accepted by the Jews and rejected by the Arab community.

The second version proposed creating a united state with equal representation of Muslim, Christian and Jewish communities, and it was accepted by the Arabs and rejected by the Jews. In order to discuss the matter and submit proposals the UN formed the Special Committee of Palestine

⁶⁸ Bregman, Ahron & El-Tahri, Jihan. *The Fifty Years War. Israel and the Arabs*, p.21.

(UNSCOP) in May, 1947. Having visited Palestine on September 1, 1947, the Committee submitted a report to the UN. The report read, in particular that "only through division it will be possible to find the integral expression of the two contradictory national yearnings, as well as to help the two peoples occupy their places in the international community and in the family of the United Nations as independent states". In November, 1947, the above mentioned report was handed to the General Assembly of the UN.

On November 29, 1947 the Zionist leaders started an unprecedented energetic lobbyist activity as a result of which the UN General-Assembly voted in favor of dividing Palestine and creating the state of Israel after the British Mandate date expired (33 against 13 votes)⁶⁹.

Provision 181, concerning division, envisaged creation of two states- Jewish and Arab. Part of Palestine occupying 14000 sq. km. was given to the Jewish state (inhabited by 558000 Jews and 405000 Arabs), while the Arab state was to occupy 11500 sq. km. (inhabited by 804000 Arabs and Jews). The holy places including Jerusalem and Bethlehem were to be an international zone. It also stipulated that an economic union was to be formed between the two states in order to control money, the customs-houses, railway, postal services as well as the ports of Haifa and Jaffa⁷⁰.

After voting Abdul Rahman Azzam Pasha left the hall of the UN General Assembly warning that "the demarcation line will turn into a line of fire and blood"⁷¹. And certainly, after the withdrawal of the British troops on May 15 and the creation of the state of Israel the first Arab-Israeli war broke out.

Some historians try to underline the tactical reasons behind the Arabs' failure in counter-acting Zionism in Palestine: "The Arabs' opposition to the Jewish settlements was rooted in emotions, religion xenophobia and other complex feelings overwhelming people when the influx of new-comers changes their surroundings. The Arabs in Palestine were eager to preserve their lifestyle, which was endangered. Arab delegations were sent to Britain to speak to W. Churchill but they didn't substantiate their rejection properly. For instance, their objection to the Jewish immigration was substantiated by the argument that the country was not able to receive so many people.

⁶⁹ The USSR also voted for division.

⁷⁰ Gresh, Alain & Vidal, Dominique. A to Z of the Middle East. Zed books, London, 1990, pp. 150-151

⁷¹ Bregman, Ahron & El-Tahri, Jihan. The Fifty Years War. Israel and the Arabs, p. 26.

Churchill perceived the problem thinking that the Arabs' rejection was based on economic grounds and then he proceeded to prove that their economic fears were groundless"⁷².

It is indeed limited explanation, since the major reason for the Arabs' failure is that they, unlike the Jews, **lacked proper ideology and a clear cut program to oppose Zionism**. Moreover, **they did not have national unity so crucial to their success**. The contradictions among the Arab leaders both in Palestine and other Arab countries (the disagreement between Hajj Amin al-Husayni and Raghib al-Nashashibi) as well as the **different goals** the leading politicians pursued hindered the realization of united and efficient policy in Palestine⁷³.

Thus the Palestine - Israeli conflict outgrew Palestine and involved other Arab countries and superpowers changing into an international issue on the agenda that need be settled.

Unfortunately, Palestine's immediate neighbors such as Egypt, Syria, Transjordan had various viewpoints concerning Palestine's future status. For Syria, Palestine's loss together with Alexandretta Sanjak and Lebanon, besides the above-mentioned military-political and economic dangers, was another loss of "Bilad ash-Sham". That is why Syria, unlike the other Arab states, reacted to the loss of Palestine so painfully. It seriously influenced the formation and further development of the Syrian political thought.

Abdallah, Transjordan's King, meant "to take advantage" of the situation and expand the territory of his country at the expense of Palestine. With this aim he put forward the idea of creating "Great Syria".

The key issue on the agenda of Egypt was the struggle against the British presence. The Palestine problem was not a priority and at the initial stage of Nasser's power some attempts were made to obtain the Jews' support to provide the withdrawal of Britain from the country.

Iraq's authorities, in their turn, aspired to unite all the countries of the "Fertile Crescent", Palestine among them, under their own aegis.

Naturally, all this made it impossible to work out and realize a common policy concerning the Palestine problem which had already become

⁷² Fromkin, David. A Peace to End all Peace. The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East, p. 523.

⁷³ Sharif Hussein of Mecca constantly believed the British who assured that the Jewish settlements would in no way limit the Arabs' political and economic liberties.

a pan-Arab matter. Yet this does not at all mean that these countries did nothing to help Palestine counter-act Zionist policy. After all the Arab authorities were obliged to react to the sentiments of the public raising their protest against "Jewishization" of Palestine and in favor of the Arab people.

It was already mentioned that the critical situation in Palestine, in 1936, confirmed the position of the pro-Palestine Arab countries and extremist nationalist forces, which proceeded to take advantage of the problem in their own political interests. In this period all the political forces in Syria were against the possibility of creating a Jewish "national home" in Palestine. Maybe certain politicians "might accept and tolerate the idea of limited sovereignty or self governing for Israel in a vast alliance, in a small part of Palestine, but all of them rejected the creation of a completely independent Jewish unit in Palestine"⁷⁴.

The "National Alliance" In Syria and particularly the group "Istiklal" demanded "Arab Palestine" which was to become part of pan-Arab unity. This group was to become the mightiest in the Syrian political arena and to support Syria's first President's, Shukry al-Quwatli's, rule.

The events in Palestine made the leaders of the Arab world take measures, as far as their modest resources allowed them, which were meant to stabilize the situation in Palestine, stop the Jewish immigration and alter the policy of the British authorities.

Arabism, the policy conducted towards unity in the Arab world, was conspicuous at most. It has its reasons. Advocating Arabism made it possible to unite the country's multi-faceted political forces on the basis of united ideology as well as ask other Arab countries for help, if not with the creation of "Great Syria", then at least to preserve Arab identity in Lebanon, Palestine and other countries. Arabism guaranteed such a possibility.

More and more the Syrians were gradually involved in the struggle against Zionism in Palestine. We have already said that there were demonstrations, strikes in Syria; money was raised in order to support the Palestinians. The Syrians actively participated in organizing and realizing armed struggle against the Jews in Palestine, too.

Fawzi al-Kawukji, a Syrian, led the Palestinians' armed struggle against the British and the Jews⁷⁵. He declared himself commander-in-chief of the Syrian rebellion in southern Syria. Actually al-Kawukji's participation in fighting in Palestine immediately involved the Syrian authorities in the Palestine problem under the circumstances of the French mandate. Syrian volunteers, mostly from poor classes, though there were representatives of a few noble families living in Homs, joined al-Kawukji and occupied leading positions in the Palestinian rebellion⁷⁶.

Some of the Syrians actively supporting and participating in the Palestinian rebellion were Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Ghassamy and Sheikh Muhammad al-Ashmar. The former was a Syrian Muslim extremist and in 1935 headed the struggle of Palestinian detachments near Haifa while the latter headed one of the Palestinian detachments during the rebellion in 1936-1939⁷⁷.

Syrian military, material and propagandist support to Palestine was coordinated in Damascus, by the "Committee in Palestine's Defense." Besides boycotting Jewish goods this committee held an Arab Congress in Bludan (eastern Syria) during which resolutions of extreme anti-Zionist nature were adopted as well as measures were worked out to support the Palestinian people's struggle.⁷⁸

In the Syrian political field, within the "National Alliance" two standpoints towards the Palestine problem were formed- those of J. Mardam and Sh. al-Quwatli. The former adopted a more realistic standpoint concerning the Palestine problem. He was cautious in supporting the Arab rebellion officially, in public, in an attempt to conceal the Syrian support to the rebels and to put an end to anti-Jewish acts in Syrian towns. J. Mardam's behavior can be explained by the fact that he was concerned about the danger

⁷⁵ Al-Kawukji was one of the heroes of the Syrian rebellion in 1925 and an ex-officer of the Syrian army. Quitting his service in the Iraqi army he returned to Syria and gathering a regiment of volunteers went to Palestine. For details concerning his activity see "National Charity. Palestine in Fawzi al Kawukji's Reminiscences", Beirut, 1975/in Arabic/

⁷⁶ Khoury, S. Philip. Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945, pp.546-547.

⁷⁷ Maoz, Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, p.8

⁷⁸ For details about Bludan Congress see Kedourie, Elie. The Bludan Congress on Palestine, 1937. middle Eastern Studies, vol.17, no.1, January 1981, pp.107-125; Khoury, S. Philip. Syria and the French mandate: The Politics of Arab nationalism, 1920-1945. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987. Pp.554-555.

⁷⁴ Maoz, Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, pp.12-13

the rebellion might present to the talks on the mutual agreement with France and by his fear that the assistance to the rebels rendered by Syria might deprive the Syrians of the possible British support in gaining independence for Syria. In October 1937, while in Paris J. Mardam openly criticized "terrorism" in Palestine and added that "the Syrian government, together with British and French authorities, undertakes certain steps to put a barrier on the way of the rebels and ammunition into Palestine"⁷⁹. In 1936-1937 J. Mardam had a few meetings with Kh. Weizmann in order to ask Zionists for help in the negotiations with French Prime Minister Leon Blum⁸⁰.

Some considerations of the Syrian elite concerning the support to the Arab rebellion in Palestine can be accounted for by economic motives. The continuation of the rebellion did considerable harm to Syrian businessmen since Palestine was one of the major markets for Syrian goods.

The above-said policy of J. Mardam's administration conducted towards Palestine was opposed by Quwatli, and the former resigned in 1938. Owing to this Quwatli was acknowledged by the people as the leader of the Palestinian people's cause and pan-Arab struggle.

In 1939, after the rebellion in Palestine was defeated and all the pro-Palestine sub-structures were eliminated by the mandate authorities in Syria, Quwatli became the new leader of the "National Alliance". Afterwards, when Alexandret Sanjak was separated from Syria, J. Mardam lost his reputation completely, and at the national elections in 1943 Sh. Quwatli became Syria's first president and he was determined to continue the struggle against the realization of Zionist schemes in Palestine.

In the years of World War II, when inexorable diplomatic struggle concerning Syria was going on among imperialist powers, the situation inside the country was gradually going intense. A state of emergency was imposed in Syria and martial laws were in force. France's capitulation and Vichie's government gave rise to additional difficulties for Syria. The despotic military regime, restriction of democratic liberties and prohibition on national patriotic forces heated the political atmosphere. Notwithstanding famine and other deprivations, the Syrian people rose. At the end of February 1941, a general strike began; later in 1942-1943 anti-French demonstrations were

⁷⁹ P.S. Khoury. *Divided Loyalties? Syria and the question of Palestine, 1919-1939*, Middle Eastern Studies, 21 (1985), pp. 338-340.

⁸⁰ Maoz, Moshe. *Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking*, p. 9

organized. After some hesitation France was compelled to yield: on March 25, 1943, the Constitution adopted, on March 14, 1930, was restored, and Paris signed agreements with Lebanon and Syria on December 22, 1943, thus transferring some governing functions to those two countries while holding the most important one- the national army.

The struggle for independence fought by the Syrian people was completed after the French and British troops were evacuated⁸¹.

As we have already mentioned, contradictions existing among Arab countries prevented them from confronting Zionist policy effectively. Iraq and Jordan were considered by Damascus to be rival countries. There was continual struggle between Iraq and Egypt to gain a leading role in the Arab world.

It is beyond doubt the Hashimians' insatiable appetite for including Palestine into their kingdom caused Syria more trouble than Jewish immigration and the realization of Zionist ambitions. For Arab countries Palestine problem became the touchstone, which collided with Arab leaders' ambitions and personal interests.

In defense of the above-mentioned viewpoint I will bring the following example: although the Palestine problem was extensively dwelt upon at the Arab Conference in Alexandria in September, 1944, and in the course of concluding the treaty on setting up the Arab league in Cairo in 1945, Arab leaders tackled the problem not from the standpoint of settling the inner political strife between the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine or founding an independent state of Palestine, but within the context of realizing the plans of "Great Syria" and "Fertile Crescent". The special resolution adopted in Alexandria touched upon the problem whether Palestine would be included into this or that country after the British had retired⁸². This fact was of fatal significance for Palestine as the war resulted in sharing the western coast, given to the Palestinians, by Transjordan and Israel, while Egypt took control over the sector of Gaza.

If Arab leaders had abandoned their own interests and had made decisive steps in favor of creating an Arab state of Palestine, the further

⁸¹ For details concerning this period in Syria's history see

⁸² Григорян Г. М. Позиция Сирии в ближневосточном конфликте, с. 14. Н. Grigorian. *Position of Syria in the Middle Eastern conflict*. p. 14. /in Russian/.

political development of the whole Middle East would have presented quite another picture⁸³.

Chapter 2 - Syria in the Vortex of Arab-Israeli Wars (1948-1967)

Syria's Participation in the First Arab-Israeli War and Its Consequences

P. Seale, a well-known expert at Syrian affairs, characterizes the years 1940-50-s as a period "of struggle for Syria"⁸⁴. It was then that the inner instability kindled from outside and the country's geographical splitting-up by the colonial powers had turned Syria into "an actually non-existent unit"⁸⁵.

By the end of World War II the "National Alliance" (Kootla Vataniya) still continued occupying a monopolistic position in Syria's political life. In the spring of 1948 the Alliance grew into a party (Hizb al-Vatany), led by Sh. Quwatli, J. Mardam, Ph. Khoury and others. In August, 1948, a group of opposition separated from it and formed the Popular Party (Hizb al-Shaab) which mainly opposed Quwatli. The reason for this separation was rather personal than political disagreements.

In April 1947, an important event happened in Syria's political life, an event, which was to determine all the developments of its home and foreign political life in the course of coming decades. The constituent assembly of the "Baath" Party initiated the history of a political force, which has been in power in Syria up to the present.

The Palestine problem, from the Syrian political leaders' viewpoint, was a means of distracting the public from political, social and economic issues jeopardizing the country's inner stability. The support to the Palestinians' struggle and anti-Zionism corresponded to the public mood and in this way the leaders of the country strengthened their own political positions. However, the newly independent country did not have either military or material resources to realize any serious interference in the Palestine problem.

Syria's standpoint concerning Palestine was definite. Damascus rejected both the decision of the League of Nations on the British mandate for

⁸³ Though on September 22, 1948, the formation of "all-Palestine government" headed by Ahmed Helmy Pasha was announced in Gaza, Arab countries abstained from acknowledging it under English pressure.

⁸⁴ Patrick Seale. *The Struggle for Syria. A study of Post-War Arab Politics. 1945-1958*, pp.125.

⁸⁵ W. Quandt. Ed., *The Middle East, Ten Years after Camp-David*, p.331

Palestine and the UN plan of splitting up the country. It was quite logical since Damascus not only lost an inseparable part of its historical-geographical territory, Palestine, but also faced the possibility for those areas to be annexed by its rival Hashimite Transjordan. Damascus was anxious as the creation of "Great Syria" declared by King Abdallah would prove dangerous for its existence as a sovereign country. Having another neighbor rival-Iraq, Damascus could do nothing else but rely on the support and friendship of Egypt, the largest and wealthiest country in the Arab world. The latter, too considered Transjordan and Iraq to be its rivals. In matters of inter-Arab nature Syria was on the side of Egypt supporting its standpoints.

Thus, in 1948, Damascus decided to take part in the first Arab-Israeli war only following Cairo.

Egypt's Prime Minister Mahmud Fahmi an-Nuqrashi Pasha objected to the idea of attacking Israel⁸⁶. He was sure that Egypt's aim was not to wage war against the Zionists but rather to provide the withdrawal of Britain from the Suez Canal. Later, when Iraq and Jordan promised military assistance, King Farouk of Egypt, worried by the expansion of the Hashimites who were Britain's ally, ordered his army to join in⁸⁷. Syria followed Egypt's example without enthusiasm.

It is interesting that before the war the Arab leaders did not worry about the fact that their armies were not ready for the war. They were rather worried about the possible encroachments upon the territory of Palestine by the "fraternal" Arab countries. Azzam Pasha, an advocate of invading Palestine, was the only person who warned against the sluggishness and unpreparedness of the Arab side. As his assistant said the Arabs "thought that the Jews would flee as soon as they saw the Arab regular army"⁸⁸. Only a

week before the invasion the Egyptian army was ordered to get ready for the war. According to a high-rank Egyptian officer "the army was not ready for military actions "either morally or from the military point of view". The 15-thousand Egyptian army, being the biggest, did not have enough ability and experience of conducting military actions.

The Syrian army, too, was in a wretched state. D. Solod, the Ambassador of the USSR to Syria and Lebanon, sent a confidential message in which he said that when President of Syria Sh. al-Quwatli summoned the commander of the Syrian armed forces and asked how many soldiers the Syrian army could send to Palestine Quwatli answered that out of 15.000 thousand only one thousand could be sent there⁸⁹. On May 15, 1948, on the next day after the declaration of the state of Israel, Transjordan's, Egypt's and Syria's armies together with some Lebanese and Iraqi detachments entered Palestine.

Thus the Palestinian-Israeli conflict transformed into the Arab-Israeli one. It became an international conflict with immense international implications.

The first Arab-Israeli war, with intervals and phases lasted officially for eight months, beginning with the invasion until the day of declaring truce with Egypt. Without enlarging upon the details of the war we have to state that Israel won the war and began to control additional areas, which had been meant for Palestinian Arabs according to the division plan. After the first truce Israel managed to get a great deal of ammunition from Czechoslovakia (from the air base Zatek)⁹⁰. Mainly due to this circumstance Israel was able not only to continue but also to win the war.

⁸⁶ The Chairman of the Arab Supreme Committee Hajj Amin al-Husayni, Palestine's chief spokesman in exile, was also against the invasion in Palestine by Arab troops. He did not try to conceal his fears that in that case Jordan's King Abdallah would not miss the opportunity to invade Palestinian territories and Jerusalem and annex them.

⁸⁷ On the advice of the British and supported by them the six-thousand legion of Transjordan was to break into Palestine and, according to a secret arrangement with the Jews, invade those areas which were provided for the Palestinians in terms of the division plan: Safran, Nadav. *From War to War. The Arab-Israeli Confrontation 1948-1967*, p.29.

⁸⁸ Կարապետյան Ռուբեն. Արաբական երկրների նոր և նորագույն պատմություն. Ուսումնական ձեռնարկ ԲՈՒՀ-երի ուսանողների համար, էջ 160: Rouben Karapetian. *Modern History of the Arab World*, p.160 (in Armenian). About the first Arab-Israeli war see Kimche, Jon. *Seven Fallen Pillars*. New York: Praeger, 1953; O'Balance,

Edgar. *Arab-Israeli War, 1948*. New York, 1969; Rubin, Barry. *The Arab States and the Palestine Conflict*. Syracuse, N.Y., Syracuse University Press, 1981; Pablo De Azcarate. *Mission in Palestine, 1948-1952*. Washington, 1966.

⁸⁹ Ближневосточный конфликт. 1947-1956. Из документов архива внешней политики Российской Федерации, с.40. Middle Eastern Conflict. 1947-1956. From the Documents of the Archives of the Foreign Policy of Russian Federation. p.40. Maoz, Moshe. *Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking*, p.19.

⁹⁰ If we take into consideration the fact that Czechoslovakia was not able to make decisions independently, without consulting Moscow, concerning especially such an important political issue in the sphere of foreign affairs, we can state that the USSR indirectly determined the fate of the first Arab-Israeli war.

The Arab countries suffered a second defeat, this time in the battlefield⁹¹.

Even the control of the Western Bank and western part of Jerusalem by Transjordan and the control of the Gaza strip by Egypt could not alter the atmosphere of general despair overwhelming the Arab world.

The Palestinian Arabs tried to extenuate the situation after the war by submitting Palestine problem to the Council of the Arab League for discussion. The members of the council considered the possibilities of creating a Palestinian state in the areas not invaded by Israel, on the West Bank and in the Gaza Sector. Yet they did not arrive at a definite conclusion yielding to King Abdallah of Jordan. Syria, Egypt and Iraq, exhausted by the war, were unwilling to be involved in another conflict, this time with an Arab country - Transjordan. Thus, about 700-800 thousand Palestinians, became refugees and sought shelter in the neighboring Arab countries. And to this day they have been deprived of the possibility of having their own state. As for Syria, the three small patches of land, given to Israel in terms of the UN division plan that remained under Syria's control after the war, were turned into demilitarized zones according to the Agreement of General Truce confirmed on July 20, 1949, and were passed over to the UN Mixed Armistice Commission⁹².

The vagueness of the status of those areas became a source of tension and recurrent conflicts between Syria and Israel in the course of subsequent years.

The first Arab-Israeli war obviously deprived the propaganda of Arabism of its significance. The Arab world, split up and prone to fierce controversies, was unable to wage joint war and unite round a single ideology. Each Arab country pursued its own goals, therefore some historians' claims that there existed pan-Arabism in the Arab world of that period, in our opinion, are not justified.

Syria's President Sh. Quwatli could not state in public that he considered Syria to be his priority or that Syria was too weak to save Palestine. In fact the leader of the struggle for Syria's independence, having advocated Arabism, ideas of Arab unity, and having vowed "never to raise

the Syrian banner higher than the Arab nation",⁹³ became the symbol of Syrian "republicanism" and initiated the permeation of the ideology of "Syrianism" in the country.

Beginning of the Cold War in the Region

If we divide Syria's political history (from the day of gaining independence to the day Hafez Assad came to power) into phases, we can single out the years 1945-1958 as the first one. In February, 1958, Syria united with Egypt marking the second phase which lasted till the collapse of the unity in 1961. The third phase covers nine turbulent years, when Syria separated from Egypt, and the problem of freeing it from other countries' influence and making it an independent "self-governing" state appeared on the agenda of regional politics.

In Syrian official historiography the first stage (1945-1958) is considered to be a period of successive "nationalist administrations" representing various kinds of either "bourgeois" democracy or military monopolist power⁹⁴. In the course of thirteen years the Syrians failed to establish law and order in the country, to strengthen the foundations of independence and statehood. One-day generals and politicians, following one another unanimously promised the people bright future while the country remained weak and disorganized, an apple of discord among rival Arab countries such as Iraq, Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia⁹⁵.

Patrick Seale justly remarks that Syria's domestic affairs were of no importance if, on a wider scale, firstly they were not connected with their Arab neighbors and then with other interested powers⁹⁶. The struggle for influence in the region mainly between Great Britain and the USA was a serious challenge faced by the leaders of the newly-independent country. Syria turned out to be under the British-American pressure: on the one hand the USA pressed Damascus through Turkey and Israel "to form a joint

⁹³ Abdallah Fikry al Khany. Shukri al-Quwatli's Jihad on the Way to Independence and Unity. Lebanon, Dar al-Nafais, 2003, p. 11/ in Arabic/.

⁹⁴ Damascus, 1965, p. 121, Beirut, 1963-1964, p. 221

⁹⁵ Yosef Olmert. Domestic Crisis and Foreign Policy in Syria: The Assad Regime, Middle East Review, Vol. XX, No. 3, Spring 1988, p.17

⁹⁶ Patrick Seale. The Struggle for Syria: A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, pp. 1-2

⁹¹ The first one was a diplomatic defeat to permit the division of Palestine and subsequently the creation the state of Israel, at the same time failure to establish Palestinian state.

⁹² See the text of the Agreement <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/Avalon/Mideast/arm047.htm>

defensive alliance", on the other hand, Britain urged Syria through Iraq and Transjordan to be involved in the schemes of "Great Syria" and "Fertile Crescent".

In both cases the fragile statehood of Syria would face loss of independence. In 1950 a "plot" against the country's security was disclosed the aim of which was to unite Syria with Transjordan. We learn from a document prepared by the USSR Embassy in Syria that Americans helped the officers of the Syrian army disclose the plot.⁹⁷ This testifies to the rivalry between B and the USA, aiming at strengthening their positions in the region. The British, in their turn, helped the Syrians prevent another project prepared by Americans: it happened when Syria's ex-Prime Minister Nazim al-Kudsi, one of Popular Party, submitted a motion of creating Arab United States to the Arab League. Any attempt to create a single defensive and political unity tended to weaken Britain's position in the region. The latter prevented American plans by making use of the obedient Arab administrations- Nuri as-Said in Iraq and King Abdallah in Transjordan.

The creation of Syria-Iraqi alliance, from Britain's standpoint, might prevent the Zionist from invading Syria. While London's standpoint concerning the peacemaking process between Syria and Israel was "utterly neutral", the USA strove to press Arab countries, including Syria, to conclude a peace treaty with Israel⁹⁸.

The Syrian delegation leaving for the session of the Arab League met with James Kelly, US Ambassador, who spoke about the US interest in the matter⁹⁹. It is clear that London could make use of the Israeli threat in order to dictate the Arab world, still weak and split-up, its own plans¹⁰⁰. In case Syria concluded a peace treaty with Israel, the USA, having relatively more powerful resources after World War II, would easily strengthen its position in Arab countries with ease.

⁹⁷ Archives of the Russian Federation foreign policy Ф. 128. Оп. 14. П.16. Д.22. Л. 39-40, 60-63/in Russian/.

⁹⁸ From the records of the conversation between the USSR Envoy in Lebanon and Syria D. Solod and Syria's Prime Minister Khalid al-Azm on April 14, 1950. The Middle Eastern Conflict. 1947-1956. Archives of the Russian Federation's foreign policy, p. 121/in Russian/.

⁹⁹ *ibid* p.121

¹⁰⁰ Hence under the circumstances incessant clashes on the demarcation line (demilitarized zone)

Even after the war, in 1948, King Abdallah still cherished hopes of creating Great Syria. It was the concern about opposing the latter that urged Syria's leadership to seek for alliance with Iraq by forming a federation. While Damascus was for "loose alliance" provided that the republican way of governing was preserved, the Iraqi authorities supported closer alliance, i.e. centralized government, a single diplomatic corps, financial and monetary integration, united command of the two armies. The idea of uniting with Iraq received a cold welcome in the Arab world. In Syria this plan was disapproved of by the officer staff of the Syrian army headed by Colonel Adib Shishakli who came to power as a result of a military coup on December 19, 1949. He immediately dismissed Colonel Sami al- Hinnawi who had taken power only a few months before and again as a result of a coup.

Here it is to the point to quote Adeed Dawisha who said: "A military coup need not be of anti-national nature. It demonstrated the increasing patriotic sentiments among the Syrians and inclination to value Syria's initiative in favor of unity from the viewpoint of gains and losses"¹⁰¹.

The question of relations with Israel was not so much a priority on the agenda of the military leaders of Syria, for Husni al-Zaim (from March 30 till August 14, 1949)¹⁰² and for Adib Shishakli. Both of them adopted a realistic standpoint towards Israel and preferred political agreement with the state of Israel to war.¹⁰³

It was quite natural. When the West was making every effort to involve Syria in the policy of "checking Communist expansion"¹⁰⁴ at the same time instigating the realization of including Syria into a unity of neighboring Arab countries, the colonels sitting in Damascus had almost no other choice: they could neither maneuver nor work out their own strategy. Such was the situation and we should not particularly forget the fact that after

¹⁰¹ Dawisha, Adeed. Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth century. From Triumph to Despair, p.132

¹⁰² In Syria's modern history H. al-Zaim's coup was the first attempt of the army to interfere with policy abusing the struggle against Israel.

¹⁰³ This situation gradually changed after 1951 when Israel unilaterally started some activity in the demilitarized zone provided by Hula's plan and this resulted in a clash between the troops.

¹⁰⁴ US President H. Truman's doctrine- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truman_Doctrine

World War II Moscow had much more important issues in Western Europe¹⁰⁵.

It was evident that under the circumstances Syria was not ready for a serious conflict with Israel, let alone for a war.

As a matter of fact, after the war in 1948 until serious military clashes with Israel, Syria was in such a situation that the superpowers' as well as Iraq's and Jordan's threats were much more urgent and imminent than the danger coming from Israel.

Claims that Syrian leaders of that period acted against national interests dictated by other forces seems exaggerated. They were simply trying to adapt themselves to reality- since politics is not only the "art of possible" but also the art of conforming to reality.

Damascus was able not only to break its relations with Transjordan and Iraq, closing its borders, but also to reject the US material assistance, which was so necessary at the time.¹⁰⁶ It also refused to participate in joint "defensive alliances" with Turkey and western states, alliances which were undoubtedly, directed against the Soviet Union.

Being a participant and witness of the Arab armies' defeat and the wretched state of the Syrian troops, A. Shishakli attempted to breathe a new life into the ideas of Syrianism. One cannot fail to value his sincere yearning for a modern Syrian army, his desire to turn Syria into a "steel fortress" and "Prussia of Arab countries". But the question arises- how to realize these plans? The Syrian leader was certainly aware that to reach these goals it was necessary to eliminate the sources of instability and political pressure inside the country. It was also vital to create a vigorous political system. So the leadership of newly independent Syria had to seek the support of one of the superpowers (USSR or USA) political and economic assistance on a large scale.

The Soviet Union did not yet have a clear-cut political doctrine concerning Arab countries many of which, sick and tired of Britain's and

France's lasting colonial control, considered the USA to be the only possible partner if not an ally. This attitude was formed due to the rapid development of the USA, which claimed a superpower's status. Following the year of 1948 both Arab countries and Israel tried to obtain the support of the USA to free themselves from the British colonial rule and to counter-balance the policy of London.

There was dire need to gain economic help in general, and arms in particular, that urged A. Shishakli to turn to Washington and then to Moscow. He meant to undertake social-economic reforms inside the country and to provide the army with up-to-date arms to defend themselves from Israel's possible attack.

Nevertheless, not a single economic or military agreement was signed with the USA because of the pressure of the opposition -doctrinaire neutralists. The latter considered any agreement concluded with the West to be an act of treason as the West had given birth to Israel and proceeded to strengthen it¹⁰⁷.

A group of Syrian politicians supposed that it was impossible to conclude a peace treaty between Arabs and Israel through US mediation as they were sure that "such an agreement would result in the adoption of Judaism by the other part of the Arab people (after the Jews had annexed Palestine). So the Arabs would rather become one of the republics of the Soviet Union"¹⁰⁸. The daily newspaper "Beirut al-Masa" remarked "We hate Russia but we hate Zionism more"¹⁰⁹.

Practical help came not from the USA but from the USSR. In 1951 Syria's Prime Minister Khalid al-Azm turned to V. Beliaev, the USSR Envoy Minister in Syria, asking for military assistance¹¹⁰. But the promised Soviet arms were given to them only in 1955. During a meeting on March 31, 1955, Syria's Prime Minister Sabri al-Asali was informed by the USSR

¹⁰⁵ The decision of rendering military assistance to Syria and Egypt at least up to 1955.

¹⁰⁶ On January 20, 1950, US President Truman sent a message to the US Congress in which item 4 read: "We must commence the realization of a new courageous project of offering the result of our science and technology to underdeveloped countries in order to improve the situation there. Item 4 was included into the US President's well-known concept of "checking communist expansion". In terms of it in the summer of 1950 Washington offered help to Arab countries. In June, 1951 Syria rejected this offer while Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan and Israel accepted it.

¹⁰⁷ Seale, Patrick. The struggle for Syria, p. 128; Public Records Office, Foreign Office (FO 371) dispatches to and from Beirut, Damascus and Tel Aviv 1948-1962; FO 371/104755, London, 26 May 1953, citing the Syrian Ambassador /in Russian/.

¹⁰⁸ Maoz, Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, p.3.

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*

¹¹⁰ Ближневосточный конфликт. 1947-1956. Из документов архива внешней политики Российской Федерации, с.142. Middle Eastern Conflict. 1947-1956. From the Foreign Policy Archive Documents of Russian federation, p. 142 /in Russian/.

Envoy Minister in Damascus S. Nemchina of supplying some kinds of armaments to Syria in terms of Czechoslovakia Agreement¹¹¹.

It is interesting that such developments in a similar succession took place in Egypt after the revolution in 1952. The fact that the USA put forward certain prerequisites in order to render economic assistance to Egypt, compelled Gamal Abdel Nasser to declare the decision of his government to buy armaments from the USSR. It must be admitted that in the course of two years after the revolution Nasser considered his priority to be the problem of getting rid of British presence rather than fighting against Israel. This can be substantiated by the secret talks going on between Nasser's proxy A. Sadek and Z. Divon, an Israeli diplomat. The talks aimed at providing Egypt with Israel's support in getting the British troops withdrawn as soon as possible. This completed, the two countries were to sign a peace treaty¹¹².

Thus in a situation when certain alliances were being formed under the aegis of the USA, and the USSR rendered military assistance to Egypt and Syria, cold war was gradually penetrating into the Middle East. Since then this region has turned into an arena of global confrontation between the USA and the USSR. The race and rivalry between the two inevitably resulted in Arab countries' military-political polarization and widening split.

It has already been mentioned that in 1951 Syria refused to accept the USA, France, Britain and Turkey's proposal to join the military alliance called "Middle-Eastern Command" which envisaged to create a NATO branch with Arab countries, Israel and Turkey. The chief aim of the "Command" was undoubtedly, to prevent the USSR from penetrating into the Middle East, rich in oil. This project was grounded by the West with the necessity of realizing "joint defense" as there was a possible threat posed by the USSR. Syria continued to carry on a policy of neutrality and non-alliance. The principles of this policy were once more confirmed in February 1955, in the Declaration of S. Asali's government.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.267

¹¹² The talks were interrupted as a result of terrorist acts organized by Israeli special services and carried out by "unit 131" located in Egypt. This crisis is known as "Lavon Case". Lavon was Israel's Minister of Defense who, after the disclosure, resigned and Ben-Gurion acceded to the post: Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. The Fifty Years War. Israel and the Arabs. BBC Series, pp. 46-49; Е. Примаков. Конфиденциально: Ближний Восток на сцене и за кулисами (вторая половина XX- начало XXI века), У. Primakov. Confidential: Middle East on the Scene and Behind (second half of the XX - beginning XXI century), p. 36-39.

It is known that on February 24 of the same year, in Baghdad, the Agreement on Mutual Cooperation was signed by the two protégés of the West, Turkey and Iraq. Later Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran acceded to it setting up the Central Agreement Organization, which was known as Baghdad Alliance. Syria refused to accede to it and, by way of counter-balance, consented to the idea of concluding a new political, economic and military Alliance with Egypt and Saudi Arabia¹¹³.

In September-October, 1954 parliamentary elections were held in Syria, and Baath (Arab Socialist Party of Rebirth) headed by Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar got 22 seats (out of 142), Khalid Bakdash, a communist, became Vice-Speaker of the parliament, while Khalid al-Azm got the majority of votes and formed a large faction of "neutralists" in Damascus.

These new forces together with the newly-formed government of Khalid al-Azm, succeeded in withstanding the pressure exerted by the Popular Party¹¹⁴ and pro-Iraq forces, and aimed at including Syria in Baghdad Alliance.

Syria's unfavorable standpoint extremely strained the relations between Syria and Turkey (the relations were already tense because of the problem of Alexandretta Sanjak). Yet Turkey exerted pressure upon Syria mostly at the instigation of the USA and Britain. Without Syria the Turkey-Iraq anti-Soviet chain was incomplete jeopardizing the unimpeded transit of Iraqi oil through Syria. Turkey was concerned about the possibility of pro-Soviet government and deployment of military basis on the Turkish-Syrian border. The situation on the Turkish-Syrian border was rather tense. Many people thought it probable that a large scale war might break out.

The Soviet government and the General Secretary of the USSR Communist Party Nikita Khrushchev came up with declarations defending

¹¹³ This tripartite alliance did not last long because of the collapse of the union of Syria and Egypt and the confrontation expanding between Saudi Arabia and Egypt in Yemen. King Faisal of Saudi Arabia appealed to hold an international Islamic summit attended by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan excluding Arab countries. The new alliance which was to be erected on religious grounds was to counter-balance Nasser's Arab nationalism. This initiative of Saudi Arabia was realized only in September, 1969, in Rabat. This congress is considered to be the foundation of the organization "Islam Conference". Syria did not participate in it as it did not have diplomatic relations with Morocco.

¹¹⁴ The party was founded in 1932 as a secret organization and is known as Parti Populaire Syriene (PPS).

Syria's standpoint. They spoke about their "willingness to render the necessary assistance in order to defend independence and sovereignty". They also elaborated upon "the inadmissibility of any attack and of unpredictable consequences in the region". During private meetings even hints were dropped on the possibility of the USSR's direct interference. Unwilling to have any complications with the USSR, Washington appealed to Turkey for restraint. Egypt hastened to assist Syria by sending a man-of-war to the port of Latakia. All these steps resulted in neutralizing the danger of Turkish-Syrian war.

According to the analysis carried out by Syrian official circles the USA wanted Iraq to attack Syria, and Turkey to join the attack later, since Syria's clash with Israel would definitely result in the Arab world's revolt, while Arab Iraq's or Muslim Turkey's attack would hardly be unanimously reacted by Arabs. As a matter of fact, in 1956-1957 Washington was working out secret plans of changing Syria's government, at the same time trying to influence Turkey and Iraq as well as other pro-West countries and even making efforts to prevent Ben-Gurion from undertaking anything against Syria¹¹⁵.

There is no doubt that Turkey's military actions against Syria were seriously being schemed. Certain archive documents, which contained some evidence concerning the activity of the Baghdad Alliance and happened to be at the disposal of Egyptian secret services, testify to it. G. Nasser even promised to hand their copies to the Soviet authorities¹¹⁶.

Syria was against joining the Baghdad Alliance not because it was on friendly terms with the Soviet Union, but simply because at the given period it was sure its independence was most endangered by Iraq¹¹⁷.

Thus any alliance with the latter would result in various consequences for Damascus from the viewpoint of its security first of all. Syria could not help worrying about the agreement on joint defense signed by

¹¹⁵ US secretary of State to the President, confidential, 20 Aug. 1957, DD 2094 (1987); US President to British Prime Minister, Top Secret 22 Aug. 1957, DD2091 (1987).

¹¹⁶ Middle Eastern Conflict. 1947-1956. From the Foreign Policy Archive Documents of Russian federation, pp. 233-238 /in Russian/.

¹¹⁷ In 1963 Damascus and Baghdad started active cooperation and in march, 1963, the Baath leaders of both countries suggested G. Nasser forming a single state of Iraq, Syria and Egypt. This proposal remained unrealized.

Iraq and Jordan in terms of which Iraqi troops could enter Jordan on any pretext and lay siege to Syria.

Yet, after the war in 1948, the presence of thousands of Palestinians reduced Amman to restraint, as it had to take into account the sentiments of the population of this part. Besides, in order to persuade Jordan to enter their neutral alliance and to reduce the British influence in the country, Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia even made an attempt to offer a package support to Jordan¹¹⁸.

But mostly for fear of inner instability Jordan did not enter into the Baghdad Alliance, and in May 1956, Jordan and Syria concluded an agreement on forming a joint military command to be able to cooperate in case there was a war with Israel. In the same year, in October, Jordan acceded to the Syrian-Egyptian military alliance.

Meanwhile, the tension between Turkey and Syria was heightening. One of the two official notes sent by Turkey to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Syria contained the following: "The elimination of Syria as a geographical concept is a matter of a day or two" in case Syria continued to be hostile towards the alliance. Then the Turkish side trying to soften the statement commented on this standpoint referring "to the current situation in connection with Soviet danger"¹¹⁹.

Turkish authorities, by the way, severely reacted to the status of Alexandret and to any attempt by Syria to raise a territorial question. Thus in answer to the statement of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Syria "Between Turkey and Syria there are some disputable problems concerning the frontier areas and Syrian citizens' property" Turkish Prime Minister Menderes said, "If you speak of Alexandret, then we will speak of Aleppo. We are ready to break our relations and close our borders"¹²⁰.

It is worth mentioning that Syrian authorities, during meetings with top officials, especially those of the USSR, raised the alarm that there existed a Turkish threat and even a possibility of military invasion of Syria.

¹¹⁸ Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Kh. al-Azm told the USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs V. Molotov about it during the meeting on June 26, 1955 in Moscow. See Middle Eastern Conflict. 1947-1956. From the Foreign Policy Archive Documents of Russian federation, p.298.

¹¹⁹ *ibid* p.262

¹²⁰ *ibid* p.263

An important step towards strengthening Syria's national security and counter-acting the Baghdad Alliance was concluding an agreement on defense with Egypt in October, 1955, and with Saudi Arabia 7 days later. These agreements envisaged to form a joint military command, providing military and financial support in case Israel or a third country attacked them.

Another step testifying to further rapprochement of those countries was the joint declaration of the leaders of the three countries (Nasser, Quwatli and Saud) made on March 12, 1956, where they re-affirmed their loyalty to neutral policy in the sphere of international relations.

After February, 1954, internal instability and the change of governments five times within one year greatly impeded realization of economic development projects and effective foreign policy.

Inter-faction controversies as well as those among members of the political and military elite weakened and slowed down the process of improvements aimed at strengthening statehood. Developments inside the country, naturally, greatly depended on external factors-gradual increase of the confrontation between the USSR and the USA as well as the growing threat coming from Iraq, Turkey and Israel.

The political forces inside Syria did not share a single opinion on cooperation not only with the USSR but with Arab countries as well. For instance, the Syrian Popular Party that supported the interests of landowners in Syria was in favor of rapprochement with Iraq.

On April 22, 1955, the assassination of Adnan Malik, Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army, all the more worsened the situation in the country. A number of Popular Party members as well as the wife of its founder, Antun Saada, were arrested and the activity of the party was suspended. On December 31, 1956, S. Asali re-organized his government leaving out the constitutional Front of the National Party and Munir al-Ajlany who was also accused of anti-government activity. Ba'ath kept the posts of the Minister of Economy and that of Foreign Affairs while Kh. Al-Azm occupied the post of the Minister of Defense¹²¹.

Although the Agreement of General Truce concluded with Israel on July 20, 1949, meant "to stimulate the current truce to change into constant peace", the relations between Syria and Israel were going from bad to worse day by day. Clashes along the frontier grew more and more frequent,

¹²¹ Seale, Patrick. *The Struggle for Syria*, p. 282.

especially in the demilitarized zones envisaged by the agreement. Israel considered these zones to be important, as it would be possible for Israel to take unilateral control over Lake Tiberias, which was of vital significance. So despite the presence of the UN Commission Israel began founding military agricultural *kibbutzim* in some parts of those zones. When Syrians expressed their dissatisfaction with shots, Israelis answered them in the same way. Then a conflict arose concerning the Syrians' right of fishing in Lake Tiberias. The conflict reached its climax in December 1955, when one of the attacks of the Israelis resulted in killing 50 Syrian soldiers. Clashes between the Syrians and Israelis occurred in this area in 1960, 1962 and 1964¹²².

Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Gazy told the USSR Ambassador the following about the attack of Israelites in 1955: "The West is trying to cut Syria from its allies, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and make Damascus review its foreign policy". According to the Minister, the Tiberias incident was not merely a military conflict, but an attack planned beforehand and aimed at frightening Lebanon so that the latter would reject military alliance with Syria, and Jordan could be made to accede to the Baghdad Alliance¹²³.

Even pro-Israel authors speak about Israel's Prime Minister Ben-Gurion's behavior as "too unyielding and instigating". General Makleff, Chief of Staff of Israel admitted: "We wanted to fill the vacuum in the demilitarized zone by building settlements and making Syrian peasants leave the area. Very cruel things happened, lands were divided into pieces, the Syrians sowed in winter and came to gather the crop in summer. We saw a *fidayi* in each peasant and treated them as if they were criminals crossing the border"¹²⁴.

There was some misunderstanding in the ranks of the political elite, particularly, between Moshe Sharett¹²⁵ and Ben-Gurion. The latter considered the Arabs to be their bitter enemies and he had an extremist standpoint concerning Syria. M. Sharett, who was in favor of settling their relations with Syria through diplomatic channels, was compelled to yield to

¹²² Drysdale, Alasdair and Hinnebusch R. *Syria and the Middle East Peace Process*. Council on Foreign Relations, p. 99

¹²³ Ближневосточный конфликт. 1947-1956, с. 374-375. *Middle Eastern Conflict*. 1947-1956. From the Foreign Policy Archive Documents of Russian Federation, pp. 374-375.

¹²⁴ Maoz, Moshe. *Syria and Israel. From war to Peacemaking*, p. 50.

¹²⁵ Moshe Sharett was Prime Minister of Israel in 1953-1955.

holders of the company but insisted that the Canal "was and had to be Egypt's".

After certain measures had been taken and official announcements had been made, Israel, taking no notice of the warnings by the UN, attacked Egypt on December 29. Great Britain and France issued an ultimatum addressed to both sides. Then on October 31 Cairo and Alexandria were bombed, and on November 2 the British and French troops occupied the Canal zone, on November 5 they seized Port Said but yielding to the pressure exerted by the USA and the USSR they agreed to the truce¹³⁴.

Unleashing a war against Egypt the two allies, Britain and France, obviously meant to topple Nasser, as for Israel, it reached its goal ensuring unimpeded entrance into the port of Eilat in the Gulf of Akaba through the Straits of Tiran. The problem of Israel's navigation in these territorial waters was to become the cause of another fight a decade later, in 1967.

The most important gain of the war of 1956 was the failure of the British and French armies, and their compulsory withdrawal from Egypt symbolized the end of the epoch of the British and French rule in the Middle East. The USA came up as a Western superpower in the region and turned out to be in the midst of active confrontation and struggle against the USSR. In the region a new system was formed with two opposing camps one of which included the USSR and countries with "nationalist" administrations, i.e. Egypt, Syria and after 1958 also Iraq, while the second

camp consisted of the USA, Israel and "moderately" pro-American Arab monarchies, i.e. Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, etc.¹³⁵.

The Suez crisis made an Arab hero of Nasser. He brought the war to a triumphant end by nationalizing the Suez Canal Company and by providing the military assistance of the USSR. From the Arabs' viewpoint, Egypt fought against Britain, France and Israel while Nasser challenged the whole world and won.

The events and changes in Egypt influenced other Arab countries particularly Syria.

From the very beginning of the crisis Syria declared about its complete solidarity with and support to Egypt and stated that the West took advantage of the Suez Canal nationalization in order to suppress national awakening in Arab countries. Syria's standpoint was that there was no need for a third party's control over the canal in order to ensure free international navigation, and that it was quite enough if Egypt officially took up the obligation of such control. Otherwise, as Damascus supposed, imposing international control over the canal would reduce Egypt's independence and sovereignty¹³⁶.

During the war Syria was ready to help Egypt but General Amr, Commander of the Egyptian army, persuaded Syria not to be involved in the war for fear of Syria's possible invasion by Britain and France. However, in the course of the war Syria shot a British plane flying over its territory, blew

¹³⁴ For details of the war of 1956, see *Политика Британии на Ближнем и Среднем Востоке*. М., 1966. The Policy of Britain in the Near and Middle East, Moscow, 1966, /in Russian/; Медведко Л.И. К Востоку и западу от Суэца. М., 1980. L. Medvedko. To the East and West of the Suez. Moscow, 1980 /in Russian/; Neff, Donald. Warriors at Suez: Eisenhower takes America into the Middle East. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1981; Kunz, B. Diane. The Economic Diplomacy of the Suez Crisis. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991; Freiburger, Z. Steven. Dawn over Suez: The Rise of the American Power in the Middle East. Chicago, 1992; Kyle, Keith. Suez. New York: Str. Martin's Press, 1991; Lucas, W. Scott. Divided We Stand: Britain, the US and the Suez Crisis. London: Holder and Stoughton, 1991; Louis, Roger William and Owen Robert. Suez 1956: The Crisis and its Consequences. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989; Childers, B. Erskine. The Road to Suez. London, 1962; Nutting, Anthony. No End of a Lesson. London, 1967; US Special report. The Suez Canal Problem. Washington, 1956; Lloyd, Selwyn. Suez 1956: A Personal Account. London, 1978

¹³⁵ The newly-formed Patron-Client system, in its turn, includes the following six groups of relations:

1. the relations between superpowers-USSR and USA
2. patron client relations-USA and Israel
3. patron-client relations-USSR and Syria,(up to 1973) USSR and Egypt, USSR and Iraq(after 1958)
4. rival patron-rival client relations-USA and Syria
5. rival patron-rival client relations-USSR and Israel
6. rival client-rival client relations-Israel and Egypt, Israel and Syria.

See Handel Michael. Weak States in the International System, London, Frank Cass, 1981. Shoemaker Christofer & Spanier John. Patron-Client State Relationships, Multilateral Crisis in the Nuclear Age, New-York, Praeger, 1984.

¹³⁶ FO 371/12156, Tel Aviv, 13 December, 1956; US National Archive (NA)/68300/10657, DOS 179, 17 December, 1956.

up a British tanker passing through its territorial waters as well as broke off its diplomatic relations with Britain and France¹³⁷.

The Suez war as well as Israel's hostile actions in the Syrian-Israeli frontier areas stimulated the rapid growth of anti-Israeli sentiments in Syria. Syria's administration was worried about the likelihood of war against Israel for which the country was not ready yet despite the growth of its military expenses¹³⁸.

Unification of Syria and Egypt, Formation of the United Arab Republic (1958-1961)

In March, 1957, the US Congress ratified Eisenhower's Doctrine, and Syria found itself in a more vulnerable situation. This Doctrine envisaged economic and military package assistance to those countries in the Middle East which were US clients. It also authorized the US President to carry out military interference in any country of the region "threatened by an open attack undertaken by any country controlled by international communism"¹³⁹. This meant that Washington took up the responsibility of defending the interests of the West in the region, and this responsibility was a priority.

It is surprising that during the meetings with the USSR leaders American top officials labeled supplying Soviet arms to Syria and Egypt as

¹³⁷ FO 371/121867, Damascus, 30 October, 1956; Seale, Patrick. *The Struggle for Syria*. London. 1965, p.262.

¹³⁸ Syria's military expenditure grew about 2.5 times in 5 years (1955-1960). Nevertheless it was twice less than Israel's expenditure which was 72.3 million dollars in 1955 and 161.1 million in 1960. (see table)

Year	£ million. Eng. pound	\$ million. USA dollar	G.N.P. (£)	G.N.P. %
1955	104.8	29.3	2.017	5.2%
1956	166.3	46.7	2.757	6.0%
1957	166.0	46.4	2.884	5.8%
1958	276.8	77.4	2.273	12.2%
1959	271.3	75.9	2.195	12.3%
1960	285.1	75.7	2.913	9.8%

Safran, Nadav. *From War to War. The Arab-Israel Confrontation, 1948-1967*, p. 170; p. 199.

¹³⁹ Ambrose Stephen. *Eisenhower*, 2vols, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984, pp. 381-388.

"dangerous, inadmissible, breaking the balance of forces in the region", etc. At the same time they adopted the doctrinal decisions to render similar assistance to their "faithful" Arab countries. At a meeting with the USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Gromyko (held in New York, October, 1957) the US State Secretary A. Dulles justified the US policy saying, "The USA is interested in maintaining the independence of the Near and Middle Eastern countries. The USA supplanted its allies, Britain and France, from the region not for the Soviet Union to occupy their place. We ourselves do not want to invade the region. Eisenhower's doctrine aims at supporting the Middle Eastern countries. The USA does not pursue any other goal and does not want to obtain any political position. But we do not want Britain, France or the USSR to do it"¹⁴⁰.

But in fact the two superpowers, the USA and the USSR, fought for "clients" in the Middle East by supplying arms and ammunition to them, granting loans and rendering other financial support.

"In any case the superpowers should not be believed or relied on" - this was the lesson Arab countries had learnt from the long-lasting colonial rule of Britain and France.

The Armenian saying "there is no salt in that bread" is to the point with regard to both the USA and the USSR. The Arab "clients" trusted neither of them. Up to the present they have not been able to overcome the complex concerning superpowers.

Certainly the policy of the superpowers was, in most cases, compelling, sometimes unyielding and stiff. This can be explained from various viewpoints. But the Arabs who are very sensitive and eager to preserve their dignity, can resist the above-mentioned policy, moreover they hate it and fight against it to the end.

With regard to the USSR the situation was complicated for an important reason. Arab countries feared that close cooperation with USSR would result in the strengthening of the communist parties in their countries, and Moscow would be able to interfere in their home affairs relying on those parties. That is the reason why communist parties in Nasser Egypt and Baath Syria were fiercely fought against. Arab leaders did not want their friendship with the USSR "to be ideologised" and they did not miss the opportunity to underscore their ideological differences. In this connection it is worth

¹⁴⁰ *ibid* pp. 120-124.

mentioning what Nasser said before uniting with Syria: "In the course of two years (1955-1957) I have not seen or heard the Soviet Union demand anything in return for its support to Egypt or do anything which can harm the Egyptian-American relations. Just the other way about, the Soviet Union has always advised us to be reasonable and to avoid worsening our relations. While the American side, not rendering any practical assistance, has always tried to blackmail us, in the most difficult situations, threatening with grave consequences"¹⁴¹. But only two years later, when Syria and Egypt had already united, the communist party was suppressed and communists were persecuted, Nasser announced that the Soviet Union interfered in Egypt's home affairs.

Egypt and Syria trusting neither the USA nor the USSR always tried to take advantage of their controversies providing utmost economic, military and other support and privileges for themselves. They never followed the policy dictated by the "patron" countries obediently. The bipolar world order was more favorable for developing countries than today's uni-polar system when there is not even a single serious factor to counter-act the USA. That is the reason why there is certain nostalgia for the cold war period in the Arab world. There is nostalgia not for the USSR, but for the usefulness of the possibilities and situations caused in the region by the cold war.

Concerning Syria's standpoint to settling the Palestine-Israeli conflict this is what Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Salah Bitar, said to USSR Ambassador to Syria, S. Nemchina, in February, 1958: "At present Syria is not interested in the settling the Palestinian problem in terms of the UN plan (1947) to divide Palestine since it can result in accepting the fact of separating Israel from Palestine, a fact which is considered unfair by the Arab world and cannot be acceptable. As in the past so at present, Syria does not accept the UN resolution on Palestine's division. Yet Syria thinks that there are some issues based on the Palestinian problem on which certain

¹⁴¹ Middle Eastern Conflict. 1957-1967. From the Foreign Policy Archive Documents of Russian federation, pp.266-275: G. Nasser's disappointment with Moscow and his attempts to improve the relations with the USA could also be accounted for by the USSR's refusal to supply planes and missiles of medium radius. Negative results were also produced by some publications in the West, in the French and British press, "about an assassination attempt against G. Nasser, being prepared by the USSR". By his anti-communist campaign Nasser counted on the US support to him to remove his opponent Abd al-Karim Qasim from power in Iraq.

resolutions should be currently passed. Some of those issues are the problem of Jewish immigration and that of Arab refugees who should be returned to the lands where they used to live before the division of Palestine. The growth of Israel's population is worrying and the Jewish immigration should be limited"¹⁴².

It should be mentioned that in that period Syria's foreign policy did not include the Palestinian problem in its priorities. It was rather of applied importance for Damascus, i.e. for solving the refugee problem, receiving UN assistance, etc. The problems of water, frontier areas were more important for the Syrian government as they were a source of tension in the relations between Syria and Israel.

Palestine problem was seriously included in the Arab agenda only in 1963 in Iraq, and in Syria after the Baath came to power, later, in 1964 in the Middle Eastern arena after the creation of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Actually Israel's belligerent behavior and the increasing tension on the Syrian-Israeli frontier, the presence of serious foreign threat posed by Iraq and Turkey, the American new "Eisenhower's" Doctrine, internal instability made Egypt's and Syria's further rapprochement inevitable which eventually resulted in unification of those two countries in the United Arab Republic (UAR) in February, 1958¹⁴³.

There are opinions according to which Syrian leaders' decision to unite with Egypt was mainly conditioned by the internal political situation when the Communist Party was gradually gaining influence and power inside the country. The Ba'ath strengthening its position, especially after the Suez war, and faithful to the ideology of pan-Arabism and provision of unity of the Arab world, approved of the union. It is most likely that the Ba'athists hoped, through Nasser, to get their future opponents removed from the arena¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴² *ibid*, pp. 177-178

¹⁴³ Concerning the process of Egypt's and Syria's uniting. See Malik, Mufti. *Sovereign Creations: Pan-Arabism and Political Order in Syria and Iraq*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996, chap.6. Torrey, Gordon. *Syrian Politics and the Military, 1945-58* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1964) pp. 374-81; Seale, Patrick. *The Struggle for Syria*. London, 1965, chap.22.

¹⁴⁴ Bennett N. Michael. *Dialogues in Arab Politics: Negotiations in Regional Order*. Columbia University Press, 1988, ch. 5. *The Ascent and Descent of Arabism, 1956-67*; Rabinovich, Itamar. *Syria Under the Ba'ath, 1963-66*, pp. 9-10; 15.

By the way, Nasser was not an active supporter of the union¹⁴⁵. While Syria wanted to speed up the process of uniting with Egypt, Nasser was more in favor of closer cooperation in political, economic, military and cultural spheres than for the legal formation of the alliance. His main concern originated from the fact that Syria was a parliamentary republic while Egypt was a presidential one. There were no political parties in Egypt whereas they were numerous in Syria. Egypt's leader was particularly concerned about the activity of the Communist Party of Syria¹⁴⁶. Nevertheless, considering himself the leader of the Arab world, Nasser could not turn down Syria's proposal of forming a union¹⁴⁷.

Thus the "marriage" took place, people in both countries were in a festive mood. No wonder that the plebiscites declared in Egypt and Syria a few days after the declaration of unification, produced the following results - 99,25 per cent in Egypt and 99,8 per cent of votes in Syria in favor of uniting.

The formation of the union had a peculiar effect on Lebanon in 1958, later on Iraq and Jordan, destabilizing the interior political situation. This served as a pretext for the USA and Britain to carry out direct military interference in the home affairs of Lebanon and Jordan.

In the course of the existence of the union Palestine-Israeli conflict was not a priority in the UAR's foreign policy. The conflicting sides, both the Arabs and the Israelites, focused more on advocating than settling the problem. Nasser controlled the Sector of Gaza and raised the problem of creating the state of Palestine only formally. Jordan was quite satisfied with the situation, as a considerable part of Palestine on the western bank of the River Jordan had been actually swallowed by it. At the same time King Hussein declared the right of all the Palestinians of receiving Jordan citizenship, thus removing the problem of Palestinian refugees from the

agenda. Israel, evidently, was content with the part of Palestine invaded in the war of 1948.

A vital issue existing between Israel and the UAR was the problem of unimpeded shipping Israeli goods through the Suez Canal. On February 1, 1960 the Israeli armed forces carried out a serious instigating act entering the demilitarized zone on the south-eastern shore of Lake Tiberias and destroying the Syrian village of Hirbat-Tavafik. The incident began, for the Israelites began tilling the arable lands in this area. Regarding this as invasion of their territory the Syrian's opened fire at the peasants. In answer to this the Israeli soldiers destroyed the whole village. The incident caused abrupt worsening of the relations between Israel and the UAR. The Egyptian army started for the Sinai Peninsula. It became possible to avoid a direct clash, particularly, due to the USA's active interference in checking Israel. The US President made a speech in which he stated that "from then on Washington would abstain from supplying arms to Israel"¹⁴⁸. Two American men-of-war entered Jordan's harbor of Aqaba, and it was stated that this step of Washington was dictated by the tough situation on the frontier of the UAR and Israel.

We hold the opinion that the above-mentioned steps aimed, first of all, at gaining Egypt's sympathy and improving the relations with it. In its turn Israel took advantage of the unstable situation to ask the USA for help substantiating the request by the threat posed by the UAR. Immediately after this incident, on March 7 Ben-Gurion's visit to the USA came to confirm that the USA's desire for rapprochement with Arab countries was not to be realized at the expense of Israel.

Combining these two contradictory wishes by the USA, i.e. deepening cooperation with Israel and rapprochement with Arab countries, has been obstructing the realization of an effective foreign policy in the region for years.

We have singled out the years of Syria's union with Egypt as the second period in Syria's modern political history, a period which lasted three and a half years during which Syria lost its political independence and continued to exist only as a geographical unit¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁵ By then in terms of the Defense Agreement, signed before, a joint military command had already been founded, a united committee of ministers had been organized to work out foreign policy, serious steps had been made aimed at joint projects of economic development, at conforming the educational system.

¹⁴⁶ Considering communists to be the "third column" and the "USSR's instrument", after uniting Nasser waged war against the communists in the country thus causing certain tension in the relations with the USSR at the same time allowing the USA to cherish hopes of rapprochement.

¹⁴⁷ After uniting, on Nasser's demand, the activity of the political parties was prohibited in the UAR.

¹⁴⁸ Middle Eastern Conflict. 1957-1967. From the Foreign Policy Archive Documents of Russian Federation, pp. 311-313.

¹⁴⁹ The third period covers the nine stormy years of 1961-1970 when having separated from Egypt Syria included the problem of freeing itself from the sphere of other countries' influence and turning it into an independent state in the agenda of its regional policy. The

The peculiarities of economic development in Syria as well as the differences in political requisites, unlike those of Egypt, were ignored in the union period. The business class of Syria was displeased with Nasser's socio-economic policy and the Egyptian bourgeoisie's ambition to establish their rule in Syria¹⁵⁰.

In September, 1961, worsening of Syria's internal political situation resulted in the split of the union which lacked perspective from the very beginning. Egypt's indiscreet, non-prudent "colonial" policy towards Syria, the forced import of "Arab socialism", the ideological differences between Nasserism and Ba'ath-ism, concerning, in particular, the problem of Arab unity,¹⁵¹ all this resulted in the failure of the first and last attempt at unity in the modern history of Arab countries¹⁵².

This collapse marked the crisis of the pan-Arabist ideology in the Arab world. It did not meet the requirements of the given period already and had lost its former political significance¹⁵³. The interests of the state became superior to the ideas of Arab unity. Again the victory was to the "wordly" nationalism-"Syrianism"¹⁵⁴.

Syria's most powerful political identity-the Ba'ath came up with a declaration in which it condemned "the attempt to establish a military

fourth period, 1970-2000, is that of H. Assad's power. In June 2000, the latest period-that of Bashar Assad-began.

¹⁵⁰ E.Pir-Budaghova. Political and Socio-economic reforms in Syria (1962-1970), Yerevan, 1978, p.27, /in Armenian/.

¹⁵¹ Nasser's Arabism advocated the interconnection of Arab sovereign states based on power and security, whereas Ba'ath's Arabism stood for realizing Arab unity by creating a single unified political unit.

¹⁵² A few years later, in 1963, the Ba'athists of Iraq and Syria made unsuccessful attempts to unite with Egypt. Some orientalist mention the creation of UAE (1971) and uniting (1990) of the two Republics of Yemen as examples of successful Arab union. First, the creation of the UAE was not a union of independent states. Second, the union between North Yemen and South Yemen in 1990, was quite a different process. It was not a case of uniting two different Arab states. It was an instance of uniting the two artificially separated parts of one and the same state of Yemen. That is the reason why the unification of Syria and Egypt into a single state was an exceptional event in the modern history of the Arab world.

¹⁵³ H.Grigorian. The Position of Syria in the Arab-Israeli conflict. p.24, /in Armenian/.

¹⁵⁴ Y. Primakov. Confidential: Middle East on the Scene and Behind (second half of the XX -beginning XXI century), p. 58.

dictatorship in the country pursued by the backward forces in order to realize their economic and capitalist goals"¹⁵⁵.

The advocates for unity were numerous in Syria even after the power shift, that is why the internal political split, in particular, that between the civil and military wings of the authorities facilitated the realization of a coup by the Ba'athists in Damascus, in March, 1963¹⁵⁶. A new period started in Syria's political life, a period which marked the end of struggle "for Syria" and formed the political system which proved to be vigorous even in today's Syria. Under the circumstances of increasing military-political tension and controversial ideologies the Ba'ath re-established Palestine problem in the center of Arab politics, and that is one of the Ba'ath's most significant missions.

The Ba'ath's victory put an end to the rule of two Damascus' and Aleppo's, rival élites in Syria's political life. Thus the famous "fifty families" in Syria were replaced by a political power, which was well-organised and actively advocated improvements, a power that has been ruling the country for more than four decades.

Struggle against Israel and Zionism in the New Ba'ath Administration's Ideology

The year of 1963 was a turning point for Syria's political and socio-economic development. As a result of the revolution on March the 8-th Ba'ath came to power¹⁵⁷. The latter's political-ideological program which determined Syria's home and foreign policy under the motto "Unity, Liberty, Socialism", was worked out and adopted at the constituent assembly of the party held in Damascus, 1947.

¹⁵⁵ H.Grigorian. The Position of Syria in the Arab-Israeli conflict. p.23, (in Armenian).

¹⁵⁶ A month earlier the Ba'athists had realized a coup in Iraq, too.

¹⁵⁷ It was founded by Michael Aflaq (Christian) and Salah al-Din al-Bitar (Muslim) who were teachers in Damascus and had graduated from Sorbonne University. For further details see K.Abu Jaber. The Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party. Syracuse, NY, 1966; J.F.Delvin. The Ba'ath Party: A History. Stanford, Calif., 1976; Itamar Rabinovich. Syria under Baath: 1963-66: The Army-Party Symbiosis. Israel University Press, Jerusalem, 1972.

It declared unification of the Arab nation (umma) within united socialist society. According to Ba'ath ideology the Arab home-country (vatan) is a single united political and economic integrity. Arab unity is also the cultural unity of Arab umma. Ba'ath revolutionary slogans on Arab unity were rather of declarative nature and were directed towards interior political use. It was impossible to carry out unification of the Arab nation within a united state, declared by the Ba'ath in a situation when they faced various internal and external challenges while the Arab countries were at different levels of historical and current development.

The only pan-Arab organization – the League of Arab States¹⁵⁸, founded in 1945, turned out to be incapable of realizing its mission of uniting the Arab countries and including them in a united system. The Arab world did not unite either to establish a common economic market or to provide free mutual flow of people, goods and services among the states, following the example of Yemen. For years there has been a major item on the agenda of this organization – formation of the Arab Parliament, and it has not been realized so far.

Nevertheless, we should admit the fact that the League of Arab States is the only pan-Arab organization which, having covered a long way for such a long time, has been still trying to find solution to numerous problems existing in the Arab world. E. Primakov justly remarks that "It is impossible to deny the usefulness of the existence and activity of the Arab League, yet it has never solved the problem of creating a united Arab state or any common superstructural state system in the Arab world"¹⁵⁹.

From the start Palestine problem was more a dividing than a uniting factor owing to the presence of controversial interests, first between Jordan and Egypt claiming control over its territory, later among Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria striving to control PLO and its leadership. These countries have always made efforts to get the activity of PLO and its leaders conformed to their interests. Controversies arose after announcing the first PLO leader's, A. Shukeiry's candidature. The Palestinians' activity in Lebanon and Jordan was closely connected with the interior political situation there. The crisis in

Jordan in 1970 and later the civil war in Lebanon and Israel's invasion in 1982 showed that Palestine problem was regarded by Arab countries as inferior to those of providing security and stability.

The Ba'ath was the first political organization in the Arab world to place the priority of anti-Zionist and anti-Israel struggle at the axis of its ideology and foreign policy.

Opinions vary as to the ways of substantiating the adoption of anti-Zionist policy by the Ba'ath. A group of experts finds that it is directly connected with one of the principles of the "trinity" (the ideological warp of the party), and it is the necessity of fighting for liberation. The Ba'athists see a close connection between the establishment of individual liberties and liberation from the superpowers' imperialist control. The realization of the Zionist scheme in Palestine creating the state of Israel under the aegis of imperialists was part of that chain. According to the Ba'ath it is impossible to liberate the Arab world without liberating Palestine, therefore the struggle against Israel and its patrons was considered to be the major goal of the party.

Other authors, mostly Western and Israeli, tend to see a link between Ba'ath anti-Israeli policy and interior developments within Syria. In the absence of a wide social support the Ba'ath Alawite elite, representing the minority of the Syrian population, was striving to distract the discontent Islam masses' attention from the interior problems by anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist slogans. They also did their best to justify the "despotic punitive" administration established in the country by stressing the presence of constant threat from Israel. Thus, confirmed in the status of the vanguard state counteracting Israel, they strengthened their position in the region and ensured the permanent support of the USSR and other Arab countries.

Agreeing on the whole to Ba'ath anti-Zionist standpoint and hence to the ideological substantiation of their anti-Israeli policy we, nevertheless, hold the view that in the given period, especially after the failure of the attempt to unite with Egypt, the new Ba'ath authorities strove to raise the reputation of the party inside the country and to activate their role in solving pan-Arab problems by stressing the importance of anti-Israel struggle. The Ba'ath authorities were too shrewd to think that Palestine problem and struggle against the common enemy, Israel, could unite Arab countries.

The fact that the Ba'ath leaders of Syria, without taking their own forces into consideration, advocated waging war against Israel testifies to the above-mentioned. Thus on September 13, 1964, at the session of the Arab

¹⁵⁸ The initiative of establishing the League of Arab States came from London which intended to preserve its monopoly in the near east by means of that organization.

¹⁵⁹ Y. Primakov. Confidential: Middle East on the Scene and Behind (second half of the XX – beginning XXI century), pp. 61-62.

League in Alexandria, Syria's representative A. Hafez came up with the proposal of attacking Israel immediately. The proposal was turned down chiefly by Egypt on the ground of "insufficient military preparedness". Nasser called Syria's Ba'athists "hot heads" or "Middle Eastern Prussians", pointing out that the current resources of the Arab world could not provide for speedy victory "in a few days" so as to exclude the interference of superpowers and the UN Security Council¹⁶⁰.

As for Syria's maneuvering with the struggle against Israel for internal and external scruples, we hold the view that in order to provide stability in a country, pathologically suffering from instability in the course of decades, a strong centralized governing system was to be created, and this was successfully realized by Assad. The political interconnection of internal and external circumstances vividly came to the surface. By means of providing interior stability it became possible to ensure the consistency and continuity of the foreign policy. And the inclusion of the struggle against Israel in the list of foreign policy priorities resulted in creating of powerful military and security systems which, in their turn, provided stability inside the country. What methods were made use of or what was the price of this gain is the object of another, separate research.

The political document adopted at the constituent assembly of the Ba'ath Party stressed "the necessity of activating anti-Zionist struggle in Palestine". Criticizing the realization of imperialist plans in Palestine while dwelling upon the UN resolution of November 29, 1947 on the division of Palestine the Ba'ath called for the formation of volunteer detachments to fight against Zionists: "Arab people, this battle is of decisive significance, and your fate, the fate of your children, the fate of the coming generations depend on its outcome"¹⁶¹.

Further developments and particularly the war of 1973 followed by concluding a peace treaty, in Camp David, by Egypt and Israel vividly demonstrated that Arab countries had adopted different strategic standpoints and pursued different goals with regard to the struggle against Israel. Saddam Hussein's Iraq posed a greater danger for the Arab countries of the

¹⁶⁰ Middle Eastern Conflict. 1957-1967. From the Foreign Policy Archive Documents of Russian Federation, pp.438-441.

¹⁶¹ *ibid.* p. 58

Gulf than Israel did. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait dispersed all the illusions about Arab unity.

During the years 1963-1966 the most vital and strained problem remained the fact that the water resources of the River Jordan were at Israel's disposal. As far as in 1953 Israel's government initiated some work to the north of Lake Tiberias i.e. in the demilitarized zone. They were going to build two canals by which water would reach the pumping station that was to be built at the foot of Mount Taifa. From there water was to be pumped to the Negev Desert. To provide these systems with necessary energy two small hydro-electric stations were to be built.

But in 1953 after Syria's protest, under the pressure of the UN Security Council, Israel had to suspend the project which was re-started a few years later. In February, 1962, Syria's Prime Minister Maarouf al-Dawalibi informed the USSR Ambassador, "Syria is ready to start military action aimed at stopping that work even if we have to fight alone". Then Dawalibi addressed all the member-states of the UN Security Council with a request to exert pressure on Israel¹⁶². The water problem was discussed at the summit meeting of the leaders of the Arab League countries in Cairo on January 13-17, 1964¹⁶³. To counter-balance the Israeli project the Arab countries adopted the "Arab Project" in terms of which the waters of the River Jordan were to be directed towards Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. It envisaged forming a working team, while Kuwait, Egypt and Saudi Arabia promised to contribute six and a half million pounds for the realization of that project¹⁶⁴. The summit also discussed the problem of forming "United Arab Command" under the supervision of the Head of the Chief Headquarters of the UAR Armed Forces. The assistance of 15 million pound a year was provided for Lebanon, Jordan and Syria to strengthen their armies. It was arranged to put 200 thousand soldiers at the disposal of the "United Command". The soldiers were to be submitted by each Arab country proportionally and were to serve within their countries.¹⁶⁵ One of the important resolutions adopted at Cairo

¹⁶² Middle Eastern Conflict. 1957-1967. From the Foreign Policy Archive Documents of Russian Federation, pp. 376-378

¹⁶³ The summit discussed such issues as that of forming a Palestinian organization, the problem of settling inter-Arab issues such as Saudi-Yemen, Algeria-Morocco. It played an important role in restoring Nasser's reputation after Syria came out of UAR.

¹⁶⁴ Middle Eastern Conflict. 1957-1967. From the Foreign Policy Archive Documents of Russian Federation, p. 409.

¹⁶⁵ "Rose el-Yusef", /Egyptian daily/, January 22, 1964.

summit was the formation of the "Political Organization of the Palestinian People" and A. Shukeiri was to carry it out. The latter was appointed head of the newly-formed PLO at the insistence of Egypt during the summit meeting of the leaders of the Arab League countries held in Alexandria in September, 1964, though Syria, Saudi Arabia and some districts of Palestine were against it.

The internal political situation was generally worsening in Syria. The veterans of the Ba'ath party did not take part in the coup of 1963, their role was somewhat secondary. The new leaders of the country singled out socialism as the key issue in their ideological "Trinity", and it became one of the central problems of the party. The army-party symbiosis, the one party system imposed "from above", manifestation of racial and communal discrimination did serious harm to the Ba'ath's reputation. During the three years of Ba'ath power there started rivalry between the young members of the party, those members who held extreme views, pro-peasant or "right" Ba'athists, who had realized the coup, and the old veteran leaders holding moderate views. The latter were against the administration's doctrinal socialism and negligence of pan-Arabism. The rivalry was going on between Salah Jadid, Muhammad Umran and Amin al-Hafez.

As a result of this unyielding rivalry inside the party, on February 23, 1966, the "left" pro-Marxist wing of the Ba'ath came to power having defeated the rights and Nasserists. E. Primakov writes, "Having met with Syria's prime Minister immediately after the coup I was convinced that power in Syria had been taken by the opponents of the right wing, those who were not anti-Nasserists, on the contrary, they strove to have good relations with Egypt"¹⁶⁶.

Actual power in Syria was concentrated in the hands of Salah Jadid, the political secretary of the Ba'ath. According to the law the president of the country was to be the representative of the Sunni Muslim community which formed 70 per cent of the population. For this reason Jadid, being the representative of the Syrian Alavis, did not proclaim himself President and held the Ba'ath regional assistant-secretary's post.

Yet Jadid was actually the key figure in the country. All his close friends and adherents got central posts. Yusef Zuayin became Prime Minister

and Nureddin al-Atassi held the President's office. Despite the increasing controversies between Hafez Assad and Salah Jadid the latter entrusted Assad with the appointment of the Minister of Defense, for the former had great authority in the army.

The government headed by Zuayin frequently characterized as "a government of Leninist style",¹⁶⁷ supported revolutionary ideas relying on the military of the middle class, on provincial teachers, religious and ethnic minorities and the poor. Jadid's power imposed stringent control over the country's economy. Most of the well-to-do Syrian's abandoned their home country. The country was divided into two classes—"workers", "soldiers", "peasants", "students", "women" were friends whereas "feudals" and "backwards" were enemies.

Nevertheless, these changes had some positive aspects as well. The circle of Jadid's close friends consisted of honest people who tried hard to develop the country's economy "according to a plan", to build railways and highways, to exploit the newly-discovered oil wells in the North of the country, etc.

It must be mentioned that most of these projects came true owing to the support of the Soviet Union, for instance the new hydro-electric complex on the bank of the Euphrates, the construction of the oil-refining plant in Homs, etc.¹⁶⁸ The leader of the Syrian Communist Party, Khalid Bakdash returned from 8-years' exile, and for the first time in the country's history Samy Attiyah, a communist, became a member of the government as the Minister of Communications. All this served as a ground for Washington to claim that "Syria has turned into a regional communist base"¹⁶⁹.

On March 10, 1966, the Ba'ath Regional Extraordinary Congress held in Damascus stated that "Syria, together with all the progressive forces, will fight against old and new ways of imperialism and colonialism"¹⁷⁰. The participants of the congress also stated that the fight of the socialist camp

¹⁶⁷ Seale P., *Assad and the Struggle for the Middle East*, p. 64.

¹⁶⁸ Вавилов В.В. Социально-экономические преобразования в Сирии. (1946-1970 гг.), с. 100. V. Vavilov. *Social Economic Reforms in Syria (1946-1970)*, p. 100 (in Russian)

¹⁶⁹ Seale P. p. 79:

¹⁷⁰ "Al-Ba'ath", *Syrian Daily*, 16 March, 1966:

¹⁶⁶ Y. Primakov. *Confidential: Middle East on the Scene and Behind* (second half of the XX -beginning XXI century), p. 82.

against imperialism "is the best pledge of prosperity for the peoples in the developing countries"¹⁷¹.

It is clear that the policy of Syria's Ba'ath government striving for rapprochement with the USSR and other socialist countries would but disturb Washington. In March, 1965, Ph. Talbot, the US Vice-Secretary of State sent a circular to the US Embassy in Syria in which he said "by selling arms the Soviet Union tries to gain the Arabs' friendship, and it is irresponsible"¹⁷². To counter-balance the economic and military support of the Soviet Union to Egypt, Syria and Iraq (of about 2 billion US. dollars)¹⁷³ the USA started sending armaments to Israel (chiefly "Hawk" missiles, tanks and other ammunition)¹⁷⁴. But as we will see later such a policy of the White House did not play a "balancing" role. On the contrary, it broke the regional "status quo" and indirectly promoted unleashing the next Arab-Israeli war.

Rapprochement with the Soviet Union and the anti-imperialist policy adopted by the Syrian government resulted in worsening of the Syria-USA relations and reduction of the economic cooperation projects. The USA even refused to grant loans to Syria though it had been arranged previously¹⁷⁵.

We have already mentioned the importance of the oil factor for the realization of the US economic, political and strategic projects. In regard to this it is worth mentioning that after the new Syrian government announced nationalization of the oil companies in Syria, later paying the government debt accumulated by "Iraq Petroleum" IPC (August 28, 1966) and increasing 50 per cent concession payments for the oil transit through its territory the internal political atmosphere was heated. Up to 1967 plots and secret schemes would not cease while the tension on the Syrian-Israeli border intensified.

Syria's permanent representative in UN G. Tomeh made a speech at the UN session in June, 1966 and stated that the Israeli attack in June, 1966,

"is directly connected with the policy pursued by the imperialist monopolies in the Arab East". Tomeh was sure that the events in the region began to develop dangerously after the Syrian leadership challenged "Iraq-Petroleum"¹⁷⁶.

On September 6, 1966, the Syrian government disclosed two plots. One was schemed by right Ba'ath leaders-Michel Aflaq and Salah al-Din al-Bitar, the other was organized by Major Salim Hatoum,¹⁷⁷ a former member of Ba'ath regional authorities. He as well as the other members of the plot managed to escape and seek political asylum in neighboring Jordan. According to the announcement made by the Syrian authorities the investigation of the case had revealed that S. Hatoum "had arranged his actions with the US CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)"¹⁷⁸.

There are two extreme views concerning the instability in the inner political situation and increasing tension on the frontier. The first view accounts for this by "the revenge of the USA and western countries in answer to the Syrian people's struggle against Iraq-Petroleum"¹⁷⁹, and "an attempt by the USA to prevent the weakening of its position in the region"¹⁸⁰.

The second explanation is that "in 1967 the dependence of the USA on Arab oil was trifling", the oil factor was "of secondary importance" owing to the low prices and the presence of alternative sources of oil, hence it could not affect the USA foreign policy. Therefore what was going on in Syria had nothing to do with Washington¹⁸¹.

Considering the above-mentioned views to be extreme, not completely corresponding to reality we think it to the point to remark that though the embargo imposed by Arab countries on oil export to the USA and western countries did not grow into a serious political and diplomatic weapon it caused a great deal of trouble during the war creating real short-lived difficulties for the NATO and Japan. The fact that the White House had to

¹⁷¹ Медведко Л. Сирия после февральских событий. Международная жизнь, 1966, N 7, с.91-93. L.Medvedko. Syria after the February events. International Life, 1966, N 7, pp.91-93. /in russian/

¹⁷² Circular Telegram to Chief of Missions in Arab States from Phillip Talbot, March 18, 1965, Box 116, National Security File, Country File, Lyndon J. Baines Johnson Papers, L.B.J. Library, Austin, Texas.

¹⁷³ Polk William R. The Arab World Today, p. 408.

¹⁷⁴ "New York Times", April 16, 1964.

¹⁷⁵ V.Vavilov. Socio-economic reforms in Syria (1946-1970), p. 222.

¹⁷⁶ Middle East Record, Vol.3, 1967, p.135.

¹⁷⁷ "al- Ba'ath", 03.03.1967. Современная Сирия, /Modern Syria/ (Справочник), с. 217.

¹⁷⁸ "The Daily Star", 02.10.1966; 06.10.1966.

¹⁷⁹ "За рубежом"/Soviet weekly/, No.16, p.3. Pir-Budaghova. Political and Socio-economic reforms in Syria (1962-1970), p.82.

¹⁸⁰ Statement on the Results of 9-th Emergency Congress held in Early September 1967, p. 10.

¹⁸¹ Quandt W. Decade of Decision: American Policy towards the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1967-1976, p.70; Burton I. Kaufman, The Arab Middle east and the US: Inter Arab Rivalry and Superpower Diplomacy, p. 62.

give up direct military interference, an item on the agenda of the UN Security Council, concerning the problem of re-opening the Tiran Straits closed by Egypt, testifies to the importance of the oil factor, so the USA was unwilling to worsen its relations with the Arab countries rich in oil.

As for the claims that the USA had a hand in the plots baited in Syria, the presence of American plans to overthrow the Ba'ath administration is beyond doubt. Yet the accusations that the USA was instigating the clashes on the Syrian-Israeli frontier are groundless. Washington was definitely against the war unleashed between Syria and Israel. L. Johnson's administration, busy with Vietnam, would not like to be involved in another war. That is the reason why "nearly all the efforts of the USA were directed towards checking Israel and creating foundations for multilateral diplomatic activity"¹⁸². The facts presented below confirm the afore-mentioned viewpoint.

Trying to check Israeli aggressive actions, on May 18, 1967, US President L. Johnson sent a letter to Israel's Prime Minister L. Eshkol warning that he "cannot, on behalf of the USA, take the responsibility of such actions by Israel which have not been arranged with him beforehand"¹⁸³. The next day L. Johnson sent a letter addressed to Soviet Prime Minister A. Kosygin, re-affirming the USA's determination to support Israel and suggesting that they should join their efforts in an initiative to prevent the war between Israel and Syria, the UAR¹⁸⁴. And on May 22 the US President sent another letter to Kosygin pointing out that "certain forces deployed in Syria cause trouble to Israel" creating ground for a clash in the region. In the same letter L. Johnson suggested "exerting pressure on all the sides in order to evade a clash"¹⁸⁵.

On May 23 the US President addressed the leaders of Syria and Egypt calling for "abstention from such steps that will result in a war"¹⁸⁶.

¹⁸² Quandt W. Decade of Decisions: American Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1967-1976, p. 40.

¹⁸³ Department of State Telegram, 196541, of May 17, 1967. (Secret Declassified August 10, 1989).

¹⁸⁴ Middle East Record, Vol.3, 1967, Jerusalem Israeli Universities Press for Shiloah Center for Middle East and African Studies, pp.194, 196.

¹⁸⁵ Department of State Telegram, 199729, of May 22, 1967. (Secret declassified August 24, 1990).

¹⁸⁶ Heikal Mohammed. The Cairo Documents: The Inside Story of Nasser and His relationship with World Leaders, Rebels and Statesman, p.243.

Before the beginning of the Arab-Israeli war in 1967, a specific destabilizing role was played by Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that emerged in the arena of the Middle East in 1964. In the presence of controversies inside the Arab world Palestine problem became an object of abuse for Damascus, and the latter, eager to strengthen Syria's position in the Arab world, tried to strike a blow to its traditional rivals-Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Unlike Jordan, Syrian authorities allowed PLO al-Fath (founded in 1958) fidayis to make use of the country's territory as a base for attacking Israel¹⁸⁷.

It is interesting that Israel's accusations of al-Fath's attacks were given evasive answers by official Damascus: "We do not know where exactly the al-Fath detachments are and we are not in any way responsible for the attacks carried out by them". Or they would simply object saying "al-Fath has been founded and supervised by the CIA and aims at overthrowing the Syrian administration and we do not bear any responsibility for its activity"¹⁸⁸.

At the same time it is necessary to mention that "being well aware of Israel's military superiority" Syria's leading circles were unwilling to start a war with Israel and even in the face of most strained relations they did not expect a war to ensue¹⁸⁹. They thought so on the false ground that Israel would avoid waging large scale war because of the increasing political and economic crisis overwhelming the country. This standpoint is clearly expressed in the speech made by Syria's Prime Minister Zu'ayin in April, 1967: "At present Israel is on the verge of collapse. The administration is shocked and split because of the struggle for power, its economy is in crisis. Israel's military superiority is a myth that cannot deceive us. Even if every Israelite becomes a soldier, will it give military superiority to Israel"¹⁹⁰.

In general the problems concerning Palestine's liberation occupied a central position in the Ba'ath ideology. According to Ba'athists Palestine's liberation would be successfully brought to a triumphant end only under the circumstances of the Arab world's unity by carrying on a national-liberation

¹⁸⁷ Rabinovich, Itamar. Syria under Baath: 1963-66: The Army-Party Symbiosis, pp. 180-208. In 1961 Fath's headquarters was moved to Damascus.

¹⁸⁸ Burdett. Winston. Encounter with the Middle East. An Intimate Report What Lies Behind the Arab-Israeli Conflict, p.169.

¹⁸⁹ Maoz, Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peace-Making, p. 85.

¹⁹⁰ Middle East Record, vol. 3, 1967, p.160.

struggle "in order to liberate the whole Arab fatherland". Other Arab countries' standpoint was to start fighting actively only after achieving military superiority over Israel. The Ba'ath considered this approach to be defeatist. The party held the view that the conservative and backward Arab countries squandered huge sums to obtain weapons in order to gain superiority not over Israel but over progressive Arab countries. As an alternative the Ba'ath suggested "the way of national-liberation struggle which had been chosen by the people of Algeria"¹⁹¹.

There is a viewpoint that on the eve of 1967 worsening of the situation on the Syrian-Israeli border was closely connected with the political tension inside Syria. Those who support this viewpoint state that the political tension inside Syria even threatened the existence of the Ba'ath regime. In order to save the latter and to extenuate the tension inside Syria the USSR made great efforts to activate the Syrian-Egyptian Defense Agreement by informing them of the concentration of Israeli troops on Egypt's border but this changed the situation for the worse¹⁹².

Certainly, Moscow wanted to persuade Nasser to put aside the disagreements with Syria and form a joint "revolutionary front". The Soviet diplomacy produced a result and in 1966 Syria and Egypt concluded an agreement on joint defense. Some analysts think that the USSR tried to provide Syria's security at the expense of Egypt though the agreement did not tackle the frontier clashes with Israel and was practically of no use¹⁹³.

The USSR and the USA really strove to prevent a war in the region. Both superpowers appealed to their "clients" for restraint and avoidance of military actions. Then Moscow and Washington cooperated effectively to exclude their direct involvement in the war and to prevent military actions by means of the UN Security Council¹⁹⁴.

As for the Syrian-Egyptian Defense Agreement, it seems that by forming general military command headed by Egypt, Nasser aimed at controlling official Damascus in case it made unpredictable steps.

Nevertheless, clashes on the Syrian-Israeli border increased after six Syrian planes were shot on May 8. In the period between April 9 and May 8, 1967, 14 military incidents were recorded on the Syrian-Israeli border. UN General Secretary U.Tan characterized these frontier incidents as "extremely dangerous" pointing out that they involved "specially trained" persons¹⁹⁵. The US Department of State evaded expressing any clear-cut, distinct standpoint concerning these frontier clashes, preferring to discuss the problem in the UN according to the accepted protocol¹⁹⁶.

The war was inevitable, for long before the war both sides realized the impossibility of maintaining the established status quo for a long time. The talk between the USSR Ambassador to the UAR and UAR Vice-President A. Amer on February 23, 1965, testifies to the above-said. A. Amer told the Ambassador that the Egyptian Intelligence Service having obtained some information leaked out of American sources in Damascus had come to the following conclusion: "In mid 1965 Israel is planning to carry out military actions against some Arab countries. Tel-Aviv considers the date to be the most convenient moment for such actions, for the Egyptian troops have stuck in Yemen, the Iraqi army is involved in Iraqi Kurdistan incidents, the Syrian army cannot act effectively because of the interior instability, Jordan's army is weak and Lebanon actually has no armed forces. Whereas the Israeli army has fortified its military potential obtaining a great deal of up-to-date ammunition from West Germany. Israel takes into serious consideration the growth of the influence of the PLO in the Arab world as well as the Arab countries' determination to realize the Arab anti-project of using the waters of the River Jordan"¹⁹⁷.

The Syrian-Israeli frontier clashes set up the processes preceding the "Six-day" war, whereas Egypt's involvement-concentration of the troops in the Sinai Peninsula and shutting the Tiran Straits-resulted in abrupt worsening of the situation becoming the cause of the war.

¹⁹¹ Statement of the National Command about the Achievements of the 9th National Congress, pp. 40-45.

¹⁹² Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov. Linkage Politics in the Middle East. Syria between Domestic and External Conflict, 1961-1970, p.157.

¹⁹³ Safran, Nadav. From War to War. The Arab-Israeli Confrontation, pp. 276-277.

¹⁹⁴ Y. Primakov. Confidential: Middle East on the Scene and Behind (second half of XX – beginning of XXI century), pp. 121-124.

¹⁹⁵ US Policy and Diplomacy in the Middle East Crisis, May 15-June 10, 1967. Unpublished Manuscripts, National Security File, NSC History, Middle East Crisis, Johnsons Papers, p.7-8.

¹⁹⁶ Burdett Winston. Encounter with the Middle East. An Intimate Report: What Lies behind the Arab-Israeli Conflict, p. 159.

¹⁹⁷ Y. Primakov. Confidential: Middle East on the Scene and Behind (second half of XX – beginning of XXI century), pp. 458-462.

As W.Quandt put it, because of the above-mentioned actions by Egypt "Washington had to change the initial red light to yellow" which was enough for Israel's Parliament, on June 4, to adopt a decision on beginning a war. The next day, without declaring a war, Israel attacked the UAR, Syria and Jordan¹⁹⁸. To have a definite idea of the causes of the war, it must be mentioned that in May, 1967, Egypt's Military Minister Shams Ed-Din Badrany visited Moscow. During this visit the USSR Defense Minister A. Grechko, then the USSR Prime Minister Kosygin spoke about the inadmissibility of the war against Israel. A. Kosygin's assistant and another participant of the meeting, an outstanding Armenian diplomat Pavel Akopov, who had worked in Egypt for a long time, elaborated on this meeting. At the airport Grechko said to Badrany, "If the Americans interfere, we are on your side 100 per cent. If the USA is involved we will lend you a helping hand, we will save you". Now we do not know how Badrany passed Grechko's words to Nasser. He might have said that Moscow "would help" leaving out the prerequisite of the American interference. Or, as Primakov recollects, Nasser might have been impressed by Grechko's words, when the latter was on a visit to Cairo, "the Egyptian army can solve any problem".

It is unquestionable that Nasser did nothing to extenuate the tension. He simply let Israel be the first to attack¹⁹⁹.

A few years before the war the fact that Israel, with the help of the French, had completed the work in Divona (the Negev Desert) aimed at making nuclear weapons, confirmed Cairo's viewpoint that time was passing in favor of Israel and that there was no alternative to war.

In fact, the polarization of the region, arming the two sides of the conflict speedily and encouraging them, carried on by the superpowers, the clashes on the Syrian-Israeli frontier areas, the actions undertaken by PLO and its armed detachments had already created a pre-war situation which broke out owing to Nasser's miscalculated steps based on his self-confidence.

¹⁹⁸ Quandt W. B. Peace Process, American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli conflict since 1967, p.26.

¹⁹⁹ Bregman Ahron and El-Tahri Jihan. The Fifty Years War. Israel and the Arabs, pp.81-85; Y. Primakov. Confidential: Middle East on the Scene and Behind (second half of XX – beginning of XXI century), p. 114.

As for Syria, it did not want to start a war against Israel on a large scale and by Soviet blessing connected its security with Egypt thus becoming the second victim of Israel's attack.

The "Six-Day" Arab-Israeli War and Its Consequences for Syria

The Arab-Israeli war began on June 5, 1967, lasted for 6 days during which Israel managed to invade vast stretches of land (60 thousand square km) belonging to Arab countries. Israel invaded the Gaza Sector and the Sinai Peninsula from the UAR, thus getting to the east bank of the Suez Canal, the whole of the West bank of the River Jordan, the eastern part of Jerusalem, the towns of Bethlehem and Nablus from Jordan, Al-Kunaitra and the Golan Heights from Syria, and stopped at a distance of only 40 km. from Damascus²⁰⁰.

The "Six -Day" war broke the strategic correlation of forces established in the Middle East. In the 90-s of last century the peace-making process was to settle the problems arisen as a consequence of that very war. The negotiations with Israel which ensued focused on the problems of returning the occupied territories and construction of Israeli settlements in these territories.

The "Six-Day" war with Israel pushed the Palestinians to the front of the struggle. In Egypt the war caused a crisis of "Arab socialism" and weakened its administration.

The war struck a serious psychological blow to the Arab world, which was able to restore its confidence only partially after the war of 1973.

Syria lost strategically important Golan Heights which due to their geographical position: formed of volcano lava occupy a territory of 1.740 square km. stretching to the east up to the Israeli Plain of Hula and the Sea of Galilee (or Lake Tiberias). History has proved that whoever occupied the Golans controlled not only Galilee but also the road to Damascus.

Owing to the war Syria broke off its relations with the USA which were restored later in 1974 but they principally did not change their

²⁰⁰ Никитина Г.С. Государство Израиль. G.Nikitina The State of Israel, p.386.

confrontational nature. "The war all the more heightened Syria's dependence on Moscow and Israel's on the USA"²⁰¹.

At first sight the US leading circles were expected to be content with the outcome of the war. Israel was more secure than ever whereas the major Arab rivals being chiefly pro-Soviet were defeated and humiliated. Yet Israel had occupied territories not only from Syria and Egypt but also from Jordan which was the US ally in the region. After the war anti-American sentiments grew in the region including the conservative Arab countries. American experts started to speak about the necessity of changing the US foreign policy.

The war was a heavy blow to the position of the USSR in the region. It demonstrated the defeat of the Soviet arms in Syria and Egypt. To ease the tension Moscow hastened to provide Egypt and Syria with free military technical equipment²⁰².

The war weakened the foundations of S. Jadid's socialist administration, moreover, it made this administration rickety.

The opposition between the moderate military (Assad) and extreme civil (Jadid) wings within the Ba'ath Party reached its zenith in September, 1970, when Jordan was in crisis.

Assad took part in the "six-day war" after he had held the office of Defense for 15 months. He had inherited a 50-thousand army, unprepared for the war, with a shortage of qualified officers equipped with the depreciated arms of the USSR army. It had only 100 Mig-17 fighters and 500 tanks half of which were useless. The army did not possess either an air-defense system or a navy. The disagreements among the top officers of the military command also played a negative role: Chief of the Staff of the Syrian army Ahmed al-Suwaidani, a supporter of Jadid, did not obey the Minister of Defense.

Undoubtedly, it was impossible for such an army to fight against the Israeli army provided with most up-to-date arms. The Ba'ath 9th Extraordinary Congress held in September, 1967, pointed out another major

reason for the defeat—"the absence of unity of the Arab peoples which had grave consequences for the whole Arab world"²⁰³.

The thing is that there was no unity of Arab countries in the post-war period either. Egypt and Jordan, that had suffered most because of the war, did not exclude the possibility of political settlement of the relations with Israel, whereas Syria was definitely against any diplomatic steps. Although Damascus prohibited the use of Syria's territory with the aim of organizing attacks against Israel, it supported "the realization of terrorism against Israel"²⁰⁴.

On August 26, 1967, the Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of 13 Arab countries was held in Khartoum. The Conference adopted a resolution concerning the Arab countries' policy towards Israel. It consisted of three "No" provisions: "No" to peace with Israel, "No" to recognition of Israel and "No" to negotiations with Israel. The conference declared the right of the Palestinian people to found an independent state.

Nevertheless there arose certain disagreements in the Arab camp concerning the continuation of the oil embargo with regard to the western countries. Syria and Egypt were in favor of continuing the embargo, while Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and some other countries were against it substantiating their standpoint by the argument that the profits of oil sale could effectively contribute to the cause of liberating the territories occupied by Israel²⁰⁵. It was also decided in Khartoum to render financial assistance to the countries that had suffered because of the war²⁰⁶.

On November 22, 1967, the UN Security Council adopted resolution N242 which "considering the occupation of territories by means of war to be inadmissible" appealed to Israel "to withdraw its armed forces from all occupied areas" and emphasized "establishment of just and lasting peace and creation of security conditions for all the states in the region"²⁰⁷.

It is worth mentioning that one of the authors and sponsors of the resolution, British ambassador Lord Caradon, in order to provide for the

²⁰¹ "Major Problems in American Foreign Policy". Steven Spiegel, *The Six Day War and the Benefits of the US-Israeli Alliance*, Ch.13, p.672.

²⁰² Moscow sent about 300 million dollar-worth military equipment consisting of 400 tanks and 120 planes, besides it increased the number of Soviet military consultants in Syria by sending 1000 experts.

²⁰³ Statement on the Results of 9th Emergency Congress held in early September, 1967, p.10.

²⁰⁴ Robert Stephens. *Nasser: A Political Biography*, pp.520-522.

²⁰⁵ Daniel Yergin. *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money and Power*, pp.554-558. See Appendix 2.

²⁰⁶ A.Vasilyev. *History of Saudi Arabia*, p.432.

²⁰⁷ United Nations, Security Council S/RES/242, 1967 (S/8247, November 22, 1967).

Arab's and Jew's agreement, had deliberately left out the definite article "the" before the word "areas" in the text of the resolution, a fact which subsequently gave rise to mutual denying interpretations. The Arabs began demanding the withdrawal of the Israeli troops **from all** the areas while Israel insisted that the withdrawal was to be realized **from some** occupied Arab areas²⁰⁸.

Resolution N 242 appealed to the conflicting sides to respect sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of all the countries in the region and declared the right of these countries to live in peace within secure and internationally acknowledged borders.

The resolution underscored the necessity of creating demilitarized zones in frontier areas of Israel and Arab countries in order to provide free and unimpeded navigation along the water routes of the region, just settlement of the problem of Palestinian refugees as well as the territorial integrity and political independence of all the countries in the region.

Washington was, on the whole, in favor of the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the occupied Arab areas including the Golan Heights of Syria, though making certain reservations in regard to the security problem.

It must be mentioned that before the adoption of resolution N242 London and Washington had signed a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding which read "by the withdrawal of Israeli forces we are to understand **withdrawal from all the areas** of the UAR, Jordan and Syria"²⁰⁹.

Unlike Egypt and Jordan, Syria adopted an extremely negative attitude towards the above-mentioned resolution of the UN. This kind of standpoint was conditioned not only by political-military but also by ideological reasons: the resolution did not reflect Palestine problem and the rights of the Palestinian people. E. Dmitriev remarks: "Though the Document was of universal and balanced nature it did not take into consideration the necessity of settling the most central, key issue, the heart of the problem - the necessity of solving Palestine problem in practice, granting the native people the right of self-determination. Resolution N 242 regarded the Palestine

²⁰⁸ Kaufman, Burton. The Arab Middle East and the US: Inter Arab Rivalry and Superpower Diplomacy, p. 63.

²⁰⁹ Neff, Donald. Warriors for Jerusalem: the Six days that Changed the Middle East, p.341.

problem as a mere refugee issue"²¹⁰. Ba'ath Syria, speaking "on behalf of the Arab nation", naturally, would not agree to such a resolution²¹¹.

That is the reason why official Damascus refused to receive UN representative G. Yaring who had arrived in the region to discuss the problems connected with the realization of the resolution. In those days the Syrian official daily, "Al-Ba'ath" wrote: "The fact that so far Israel has refused to withdraw the troops and instead demands to start direct negotiations with the Arabs means that the USA and Israel ignore the opinion of the international community"²¹².

In January, 1968, US President Johnson met Israel's Prime Minister Eshkol and attempted to persuade him to meet the Arabs halfway in regard to the occupied areas and the Palestinian refugees²¹³. In their turn the Israeli leaders stated, on the one hand, that Israel was not going to return the Golans and, on the other hand, that the Syrian leaders, irrespective of the Golan problem were not yet ready to make peace with Israel and, unlike Egypt and Jordan, they did not separate the problem of Palestine's liberation from that of the return of the Golans²¹⁴.

The US standpoint to the necessity of the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Golans gradually changed, and Washington began to share Tel-Aviv's opinion that the Golans were vitally important to ensure Israel's security. US Secretary of Defense held the opinion that "from the military viewpoint Israel has to control the eastern side of the Golans in order to defend Galilee District"²¹⁵.

Under the circumstances Syria made fruitless efforts to consolidate the "progressive" Arab countries' forces, i.e. Egypt, and from July, 1967, Iraq. Left alone and self-isolated from the Arab world, Syria stepped on the way of rapprochement with Moscow. Already at the end of 1968, with Soviet help, Syria was able to restore its military losses.

²¹⁰ Дмитриев Е. Мир на Ближнем Востоке-Утопия или реальность?-"Мировая экономика и международные отношения", 5/1987, с.46-47. Dmitriev Y. Peace in the Middle East. Utopia or Reality? World Economy and International Relations, Moscow, 5/1987, p.46-47.

²¹¹ 24.11.1967.

²¹² 02.12.1967.

²¹³ Memo of Conversation, 17 May, 1968, NSC Secret DD, 1379 (1985), Johnson Library.

²¹⁴ Meir Golda. My Life, p.270.

²¹⁵ Schoenbaum D. The United States and the State of Israel, p.160.

Generally it was often said in the West that Syria had become the Soviet Union's obedient servant and followed the Soviet line of policy in the region. In reality despite some dependence on Moscow and inequality of their relations Syria never allowed the USSR to interfere in its internal problems and affect its foreign policy. There often happened tense situations in Syria-USSR relations. For instance, despite Moscow's pressure Syria continually refused to come to political agreement with Israel. Moreover the encouragement and open support to Palestine's attacks on Israel, the invasion of Jordan in 1970, the war in 1973 and its involvement in the Lebanese crisis, etc. were realized against Moscow's will²¹⁶.

By 1967 i.e. before the strengthening of the Soviet position and the Arab "nationalist" front Washington had been trying to check Israel by means of Saudi Arabia and Iran. From 1967 on Israel began to play a central role in pursuing American interests in the Middle East and as a result of the war it became a serious regional force. And consequently the USA became the major "patron" of Israel's existence and security.

Chapter 3 – Syria's Middle Eastern Policy on the Warp of USA – USSR Global Confrontation (1967-1978)

US President Richard Nixon, acceding to power after L. Johnson, continued "the game rules" of cold war in the Middle East where the decrease of the influence of the USSR remained one of the major goals of Washington's regional policy.

Yet certain new emphases emerged in that policy. Nixon was convinced that in order to diminish Moscow's influence Washington had, first of all, to improve its relations, or at least smooth the sharp angles, with the "nationalist" camp of the Arab world, particularly with Syria and Egypt – the chief "clients" of the Soviet arms, who posed the most serious threat to Israel. Unlike his predecessor the new president was confirmed that it was impossible to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict without the USSR's active participation. "The key to peace-making is not only in Cairo and Damascus but in Moscow as well", wrote Nixon²¹⁷.

It must be noted that there were serious disagreements concerning the US Middle Eastern policy in the White House. US Secretary of State Roger was in favour of universal settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, a settlement involving all the neighbouring countries of Israel, whereas Kissinger who was US President's security adviser supported a "step by step" settlement. Roger held the view that negotiations were to be continued irrespective of the contradictions among the sides, while Kissinger was convinced that negotiations were to be held among those sides that were ready to compromise²¹⁸. Thus there was a group of "Arab experts" in the Department of State who, unlike the White House, supported a balanced attitude and was neither pro-Arab nor pro-Israeli²¹⁹. They advocated a reserved policy in supplying arms to Israel and they found it necessary for the USA to make a definite statement about the inadmissibility of the occupation of Arab areas by Israel as a result of the war in 1967. Naturally, such an

²¹⁷ Nixon R. The Memoirs of Richard Nixon. New York, Crosset & Dunlop, 1978, p. 249-250

²¹⁸ Kissinger H. White House Years, 1979, pp. 344-345

²¹⁹ The group of Arab experts consisted of US Vice-Secretary of State Rodger Davies, Richard Parker, who dealt with problems of Egypt, and Talcott Sealy, an expert of Syria /later US Ambassador to Syria/.

²¹⁶ Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillal Dessouki. The Foreign Policies of Arab states. Westview Press, London 1984, p.293.

approach was sharply opposed by the Israeli government and the Jewish lobby in the USA.

Nixon and Kissinger supported the policy of rendering military assistance to Israel. Concerned about a possible nuclear collision in the Middle East, they mistakenly believed that the establishment of Israel's military superiority would compel its Arab neighbours to give up the idea of settling the conflict by force. At the same time Nixon and Kissinger feared that, in case the Arabs suffered another defeat in the new clash, Moscow would be obliged to interfere and that would inevitably involve the USA in the conflict.

On February 1-4, 1969, the USA National Security Council held a sitting where the major principles of the middle eastern policy were discussed. It was decided to activate peace-making efforts providing for bilateral contracts with the Soviet Union and debates within the UN. The National Security Council stated the following principles of US policy:

- All the sides of the conflict must participate in the negotiations
- The aim of the negotiations is concluding an agreement not necessarily in the form of a peace treaty, according to which Israel must return the Arab area and the Arabs must promise to respect Israel's sovereignty
- The Israeli troops must be withdrawn up to the international border defined between Israel and Egypt, they must be withdrawn from the Western Bank
- A special arrangement must be made concerning the Gaza Strip
- Certain important areas must be demilitarized
- Jordan must have a civil and religious role in united Jerusalem
- The refugee problem must be solved²²⁰.

It was manifest that in the period of 1969-1970 to promote the peace-making process Washington focused on concluding Egypt-Israeli and Jordan-Israeli agreements. As for Syria, it was not included in the list of priorities of the Middle Eastern policy shaped in that period by the US State Department.

After consultations held with the Soviet Union, UK and France US State Department came up with a new peacemaking initiative known as

"Roger's Project". It consisted of a brief preamble and 10 items, which stated in detail the conditions of the agreement that was to be concluded between Egypt and Israel²²¹. It is interesting that Roger's Project chronologically coincided with the process of diplomatic and political activation of the Arab world aimed at strengthening the eastern front against Israel. We firmly believe that the above-mentioned American project definitely meant to weaken that very eastern front leaving "off side" the most influential and mightiest Arab power -Egypt, and later, taking advantage of the current inter-Arab contradictions and rivalry, Jordan as well.

The Syrian leadership refused to accept Roger's Project and criticizing it severely, characterized it as an attempt to coerce "the Arab nation into defeatism"²²². Damascus kept rejecting any chance of negotiating and discussing any plans with Israel or its "disguised defender USA". On the whole it can be stated that in the period of 1967-1970 direct Syria-American official contacts were nearly non-existent.

In that very period Damascus' relations with the conservative Arab countries grew worse, and Damascus was unable to establish practical, mutually beneficial contacts with Egypt and Iraq. The Ba'ath leaders proved to be unable to find an effective way out. The unfavourable developments in Syria's foreign policy had a direct impact on the political life inside the country resulting in serious disagreements between the military and civil wings.

The Ba'ath Extraordinary Congress held on May 20, 1969, whose aim was to confirm Syria's constitution and the new government, did not succeed in smoothing the ever increasing controversies among the members of the party elite either²²³.

Nevertheless, there were some positive changes in the country's economy. A number of economic projects were successfully carried out in a short time. In 1967 the construction of the hydroelectric complex on the Euphrates was started with Soviet help. On July 27, 1968, the first tanker was loaded with Syrian oil. It is worth mentioning that Syria was the first Arab

²²¹ The English text of the document was not published. Its Arabic translation with some reductions was published on December 9, 1969, in the daily "Al-Nahar" (Beirut), the English translation of which was published in "Arab Report and Record" on December 1-15, 1969, pp. 521-522

²²² International Documents on Palestine, 1970, p. 830

²²³ "Al-Baa'th", 29.05.1969

²²⁰ Kaufman, Burton. The Arab Middle East and the US: Inter Arab Rivalry and Superpower Diplomacy, pp. 65-85

country to extract, refine and export oil without any foreign company's participation. It is quite natural that, apart from economic benefit, it was of tremendous political significance for Syria.

It can be stated that the serious problems existing in the foreign policy did not impede the consistent realization of unprecedented progressive, socio-economic radical improvements".

As it has already been stated Nixon's administration concentrated on negotiations between Egypt and Israel and simultaneously on those between Jordan and Israel. In this regard there are two lapses worth mentioning in Washington's Middle Eastern policy of 1967-1973. First, absorbed in global confrontation (USSR and USA) problems in the Arab-Israeli conflict, Kissinger underestimated the processes going on in the Arab countries, with Syria plunged in that crisis.

Second, according to Nixon and Kissinger's strategy towards "the third world", in those parts of the world where there was no direct US presence it is necessary to rely on so-called "states-representations", which, in their turn, were to promote the realization of US policy. Iran and Israel became such states – representatives in the Middle East. The subsequent events proved how utterly near-sighted the American strategy was. This was confirmed by the revolution in Iran (1978), which was a heavy blow to the reputation and regional position of the USA. As for Israel, we are convinced that by rendering unlimited military and economic assistance to Israel Washington was putting its own interests in the Arab world at stake. Though in 1974-1975 Kissinger admitted this fact, the influence of the pro-Israel voters in the USA was so great that it eliminated all the attempts of the US administration to affect Israel's standpoint²²⁴.

In 1960-1970 the superpowers' confrontation increased. Syria and the USA, being at the poles of opposing camps, were not able to find ways and means of rapprochement. Meanwhile the Soviet Union went on arming and training the Syrian army, and this was counter-acted by equivalent and at times exceeding military assistance rendered to Israel by the USA²²⁵.

On June 2, 1970, making a speech on American TV, Nixon spoke of Syria and Egypt as "Israel's hostile neighbours". Considering the situation in

the Middle East extremely dangerous Nixon did not exclude possible collision between the USA and the USSR. He also referred to the US policy in the Middle East emphasizing that it was based on the conviction that promotion of peace and security of every state in the region was America's vital interest. Nixon also noted, "Israel is not going to throw any state into the sea whereas the Arab states intend to do so with Israel". According to Nixon violation of the balance of forces and Israel's weakening could immediately result in restarting the war. Therefore, maintaining the balance was also in America's interests²²⁶.

The situation in the region remained tense. Earlier (March 1968) Egypt had begun a so-called "exhausting war" against Israel, which ended in a truce on August 8, 1970. From December 1969 till February 1970 two Arab congresses were held – one in Rabat, the other in Cairo. The Syrian delegation boycotted the last sitting of Rabat Congress disagreeing to the draft decision, which the Syrians did not think to be "severely anti-Israeli". Cairo Congress was characterized by more unanimity of opinions and open anti-Israeli posture. The Congress condemned the USA's "anti-Arab standpoint" and appealed to the Arab countries "to concentrate all their forces and abilities to fight against Zionism and imperialism"²²⁷.

Jadid's extreme policy resulted in more frequent clashes on the Syrian-Israeli frontier areas²²⁸. On March 15, 1970, the Israeli troops initiated a large-scale military action against Syria attacking the camp of the Syrian troops deployed near Damascus, and on April 2 in the Syrian area of the truce the greatest battle since 1967 took place.

Damascus and the Palestine Liberation Organization

After the war in 1948 about 100 000 Palestine refugees found shelter in Syria. They were considered to be Syrian citizens and enjoyed the rights of Syrian citizens. S. Jadid tended to look upon the Palestinians as "heroes"

²²⁴ Rubenberg, Cheryl. Israel and the American National Interest, p. 5

²²⁵ For the first time Washington supplied Israel with armaments (50 "Phantom" bombers) in the last days of L. Johnson's presidency.

²²⁶ Riad, Mahmoud. The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East, p. 142

²²⁷ International Documents on Palestine, 1970, p. 756

²²⁸ Just in comparison with the October-November 28 incidents, 41 border clashes was registered only in December 1969. 242 incidents took place in January-April 1970. See Middle East Record, 1969-1970, pp. 196-197, 203

when they began forming "fidayis": detachments to fight against Israel²²⁹. Syrian authorities allowed them to have two camps near Damascus at their disposal to train soldiers. They had also a third camp in central Dira in order to supervise the actions in Jordan and on the West Bank. The Syrians passed the Palestinians the ammunition sent by Algeria's President Huari Bumedien. By the way, Algeria was the first to acknowledge "Al-Fath" (Palestine Resistance Movement), founded by Yasser Arafat (Abu Amar), Syria was the second to do so.

The Palestinians' activity was supervised by the operative department of the Syrian army officers, which kept the activity of the detachments in check in the summer and winter of 1966-1967.

At the beginning of S. Jadid's power there were two Palestinian organisations in the territory of Syria, Y. Arafat's Fath and Ahmed Jibril's Palestine Liberation Front (PLF) supported by the Syrians. Syrian authorities supplied them with necessary military equipment and ammunition. Owing to this fact in April 1967 the military wing of Fath "Al-Asifa" carried out four attacks on Israel and at the beginning of May bombarded the villages in North Israel²³⁰.

In 1961 the Fath Headquarters was moved to Damascus. Yet Syria's and Palestinians' strategy was not the same. Arafat was eager to fight against Israel while the Syrians did not want to start a war. The Syrians allowed the Palestinians to carry out small military actions on the demilitarized zone encouraging them from the territories of Jordan and Lebanon. The Syrians would hardly rely on the Palestinians seriously in the struggle under the circumstances when the Syrians were unable to wage a large-scale war. "The fidayis offered Damascus an honourable solution" in the given situation²³¹.

Later, in January 1964, it was decided to found Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) at the summit meeting of the Arab League in Cairo. Despite Syria's and Saudi's opposition Ahmad Shukeiri²³² was appointed head of the organisation on Egypt's insistence. In fact, simultaneously two separate organisations began their activity in the political sphere and they used different strategies and practical methods in their struggle against

Israel²³³. Fath considered armed struggle to be the only way of liberating Palestine whereas A. Shukeiri reduced the activity of the organisation to mere words. Fath did not become part of the PLO and continued its activity separately till February 1969, when Yasser Arafat was elected President of the Executive Committee of PLO²³⁴.

Assad's attitude to Palestinian armed struggle was clearly expressed in April 1972 during his official visit to Kuwait when he met with the representatives of the Syrian community. At that meeting Assad stated, **"Palestinian resistance is part of the Arab liberation movement but it is not a determining factor in the struggle against Israel"**. Then he added, "In this case the Egyptian and Syrian armies play a major role while Palestinian resistance is of mere political significance"²³⁵.

To have a distinct idea of Damascus' attitude to PLO it must be noted that the political elite of Syria, like that of Lebanon, has always considered Palestine to be part of South Syria occupied by Israel. The Palestine problem has been the corner stone of Ba'ath Syria's pan-Arabist and anti-Israeli policy. That is the reason why the Syrian authorities' support to Fath and then to the PLO has been of continuous nature.

Damascus has always striven to realize control over PLO counterbalancing Fath to sponsoring other movements such as PLF and Al-Saiqa.

That is why the relations between Damascus and PLO could not be cloudless. They had numerous critical moments, periods of rise and fall. Disagreements and controversies arose whenever the Palestinians' actions did not coincide with Syria's interests and priorities. In such cases Damascus took drastic measures against PLO.

With this regard it is worth mentioning H. Assad's words addressed to Y. Arafat in an argument between Damascus and PLO, "You do not

²²⁹ Seale P. *Assad of Syria: The Struggle for the Middle East*, pp. 124-125.

²³⁰ Lawson, H. Fred. *Why Syria Goes to War. Thirty Years on Confrontation*, p. 44.

²³¹ *ibid.* p. 125.

²³² Y. Primakov characterizes him as "a vague person lacking independence".

²³³ 8 movements were supervised by PLO - Fath, Palestine Liberation Popular Front (PLPF), Palestine Liberation Democratic Front (PLDF), Arab Liberation Front (ALF), Al-Saiqa, PLPF-GC (PLPF-General Command), Palestine Liberation Front (PLF), Palestine Popular Struggle Front (PPSF).

²³⁴ Y. Arafat's position in Palestine movement was greatly strengthened after realising successful military actions against the Israeli army near the settlement of Karamé on March 21, 1986. After this battle Y. Arafat became a Palestinian hero and the reputation of Fath, headed by him, sharply grew. This success greatly helped Arafat to be elected head of PLO. Although some Jordan detachments played an important role in the battle (25 Jordan soldiers were killed) Arafat deliberately belittled their role.

²³⁵ "Al-Ray al-Am", Kuwait Daily, 22.04.1972

represent Palestine more than we do. There is no Palestinian people or Palestinian unit, there is only Syria, and Palestine is inseparable part of Syria"²³⁶.

Syria's Minister of Defence and later President of Syria H. Assad had a more realistic attitude to PLO and were less obsessed with Ba'ath ideology than his civil colleagues in the government. Thus, supporting Palestinian fidayis he did not miss the opportunity to have them serve Syria's political goals. Assad was convinced that ideological support did not mean that a few thousand armed young Palestinians could fight at any place at any moment. PLO continued its activity, the fidayis were armed and trained in Syrian camps. Though Assad stated, "Syria is the lungs through which the Palestinian movement breathes" the Palestinian detachments were controlled by Syrian authorities and could not realize any voluntary action against Israel without the consent of the latter²³⁷.

Thus the controversies inside the party and particularly those between S. Jadid and H. Assad were expressed in their attitude toward PLO. It was especially vividly revealed on the days of Jordan crisis. In September 1970, when some clashes between the Palestinian and the Jordanian armies occurred the civil wing of the Syrian administration attempted to take advantage of that foreign policy issue in order to strengthen their position inside the party. Yusuf Zuayin, leader of Al-Saiqa, which was supported by Syrians, after visiting Amman submitted a report to the Syrian government where he suggested "invading Jordan"²³⁸. S. Jadid also approved of the suggestion. Syria's president Al-Atassy made a speech in a rally in Damascus in which he promised "not to spare blood" in order to support the Palestinians in Jordan. Such a non-prudent policy, which was meant to gain popularity, had its consequences: H. Assad and the military interfered, all the district offices of Al-Saiqa were closed, and the military command announced that the Ba'ath district offices would act as Al-Saiqa offices, for "they had become a single one"²³⁹.

After Jordan crisis in 1970 when PLO's moved to Beirut Damascus continued to support Palestinians. In 1974 at the summit meeting in Rabat Syria was in favour of acknowledging PLO as the only legal representative of

²³⁶ Dawisha, Adeed. *Syria and the Lebanese Crisis*, pp. 103-106.

²³⁷ Maoz, Moshe. *Syria and Israel War to Peacemaking*, p. 113.

²³⁸ *Middle East Record 1969-1970*, p. 1150.

²³⁹ Arab Report and Record, 1-15 August, 1970.

the Palestinian people. In 1975 Damascus offered PLO to set up a united Syria-PLO political and military command obviously intending to control the Palestinian movement. H. Assad's versatile support to PLO changed it into an important political and military unit in Lebanon, one, which posed danger for the powerless Lebanese government and promoted the civil war in Lebanon. The PLO's role in Lebanon hindered the realisation of Damascus' political plans in that important country. From then on serious clashes began between Y. Arafat and H. Assad.

The problem why at the beginning of the civil war H. Assad decided to support the right Christian forces will be enlarged on a little bit later, in the part devoted to Lebanon's civil war, but it is necessary to note here that in Lebanon the Syrian forces, in fact, turned out to be in conflict with the left and radical Palestinian forces including PLO. In the summer of 1976 Y. Arafat declared that PLO "would turn Lebanon into a second Vietnam" for the Syrians. On July 20, 1976, H. Assad answered Y. Arafat in the following way, "The Palestinian Resistance is now fighting for the realisation of other forces' goals (the lefts in Lebanon) and against the Palestinian Arab people's interests. He (Arafat) wants to liberate Jounieh (20 km. north of Beirut) as well as Tripoli, and does not want to liberate Palestine even if it declares about it"²⁴⁰.

The principle "there are no permanent allies and enemies, there are permanent interests", can be applied to the relations between PLO and Damascus. When clashes between Lebanese Christians and Syrians began in Lebanon, especially from 1978 on Damascus began cooperating with PLO in order to use their camps within the country.

After Israel invaded Lebanon, and PLO headquarters moved to Tunisia, with the aim of weakening Arafat, Syrians instigated some controversies within Fath: Abu Musa and Abu Saleh opposed Arafat's policy in their speeches. They accused Arafat of his willingness to conclude a Peace Treaty with Israel, of negotiating with King Hussein and later of visiting Sadat in Cairo.

The Syrians supported these activists, who rebelled against Arafat, particularly in November 1983, when they carried out a large-scale military action against the Lebanese town of Tripoli that was the last and the only bulwark of PLO.

²⁴⁰ Maoz Moshe. *Syria and Israel From War to Peacemaking*, p. 165.

Syrians, undoubtedly, strove to remove "disobedient" Arafat from PLO leadership. Some top diplomats of Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs openly spoke about it²⁴¹.

E. Primakov dwells on his personal and Moscow's efforts to conciliate PLO with the Syrians. He gives interesting information about the reason why Syrians helped Abu Musa and the rebels. Arafat states that H. Assad's brother Rifaat told him (Arafat) that Syrian authorities had got misleading information according to which the rebels got universal support and could have the majority of Fath follow them. Making sure that the information did not coincide with reality H. Assad formed a commission to reconcile the rival Palestinian groups. The commission did not include either Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Khaddam or Head of Military Intelligence Ali Duba who were in favour of rapprochement between Syria and PLO²⁴².

Anyway trust between Syria and PLO was not restored. Y. Arafat and H. Assad were unable to overcome personal dislike towards each other. The fact that the Soviet Union, being Syria's "patron", set up and preserved its relations with PLO and continued helping it²⁴³, irrespective of H. Assad, had its peculiar role in Syrians' being mistrustful of Palestinians.

Later the peacemaking process in the 90-s, US concentration on the Palestinian track and ignoring the Syrian factor removed PLO from Damascus' influence. Damascus needed fresh forces to go on with the struggle against Israel. One was "Hamas" in Palestine, the other was "Hezbollah" in Lebanon. With this regard a fact should be made clear: Damascus has never been able to control "Hezbollah" completely. It only allowed unimpeded supply of Iranian assistance to "Hezbollah" and the activity of the latter in the Lebanese Plain of Bekaa. In return for this "Hezbollah" abstained from such actions that could result in a powerful

counter-action by Israel and weaken Syria's position in Lebanon²⁴⁴. Syria never wanted to start a war against Israel. Damascus was interested in keeping the "ever-burning" fire both for internal and external political considerations.

As for "Hamas", it is curious that Israel was once interested in strengthening and increasing its activity in order to disrupt the Palestinian movement and counterbalance Y. Arafat's growing reputation and personal leadership. Damascus rendered versatile assistance to "Hamas" and despite the protests of the USA it allowed the activity of the offices of "Hamas", the "PLDF General Command" and of "Islamic Jihad" in its territory.

Jordan Crisis of 1970 and Power Shift in Syria

Since 1968 Palestinian fidayis' movement had grown more active than ever. As a result of the war in 1967 thousands of Palestinians found shelter in Jordan and started to set up "a state within a state"²⁴⁵. In September 1970, PLPF, headed by Y. Habbash, hijacked 4 passenger planes, three of which landed in the desert of Jordan, one in Cairo. The terrorists' aim was to exert pressure on Israel to let the Palestinian fidayis out of prison. The PLPF and PLO opposed and instigated confrontation between King Hussein of Jordan and Palestinians. It must be noted that Jordan crisis of 1970 was preceded by clashes between Palestinians and Jordan's government forces caused by Jordan administration's willingness to control the West Bank of River Jordan envisaged by "Roger Project".

In the summer of 1970 Jordan was again on the verge of a civil war. Some Palestinian groups appealed for national-liberation struggle against Jordan's administration, which was considered to be "inseparable part of the historical struggle" for Palestine²⁴⁶. This was an unrealistic and extreme appeal.

²⁴¹ Примаков Е. Конфиденциально: Ближний Восток на сцене и за кулисами (вторая половина XX века), с. 245. Y. Primakov. Confidential. Middle East in the Scene and Behind. p. 245.

²⁴² *ibid*, p. 247.

²⁴³ Though the USSR abstained from rendering direct military support to PLO, the countries of Eastern Europe and North Korea, not without Moscow's awareness, supplied arms to PLO. Thus, Arafat got necessary ammunition from GDR, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, tanks from Hungary and "Katiushas" from the KPDR.

²⁴⁴ Naturally, this situation continued until the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon, which was realised in 2005, after R. Hariry's assassination, as a result of powerful international pressure.

²⁴⁵ Delvin, John. Syria: Modern State in an Ancient Land, p. 101.

²⁴⁶ Дмитриев Е. Палестинский узел, стр. 77. Dmitriev Y. Palestinian knot. p. 77.

Syrian authorities saw a direct connection between the US Middle Eastern policy and the deepening Jordan-Palestinian crisis. According to E. Dmitriev²⁴⁷, a diplomat and Arab studies expert, in the summer of 1970 Jordan's government was going to fight against Palestinians, while the USA sent arms and ammunition to Jordan²⁴⁸. In a statement made by Syria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs it was said; "Jordan's leadership will never have the courage to strike the fidayis unless it is sure of the US support"²⁴⁹.

We hold the view that under the circumstances of increasing military actions in the Syrian – Israeli frontier areas Washington took advantage of inter-Arab controversies and tried to weaken Arab unity. Thus, Jordan was the weakest part in the Arab chain.

The White House had really adopted a non-tolerant attitude towards terrorists and, undoubtedly, pressed Jordan to annihilate fidayis. At the same time Washington did not want the crisis to deepen and spread outside Jordan.

King Hussein was quite aware of the grave consequences for Jordan, posed by the clash with Palestinians, both inside and outside his country, in the Arab world. That was the reason why at the beginning of the crisis he attempted to smooth the controversies peacefully despite the assassination attempt of June 1970. But the above-mentioned cases of hijacking and a second, though failed, assassination attempt made Hussein order his army to start fighting against fidayis. Thus, a civil war broke out in Jordan.

Syria was the first to react to the events in Jordan. In order to help Palestinians Syria ordered its land and air forces to be ready for action and concentrated the tank detachments on the border of Jordan.

US President Nixon defined the Syrian invasion as "the most serious threat to world peace"²⁵⁰ and State Secretary Roger publicly condemned the Syrian invasion²⁵¹. On September 17 Nixon announced, "The United States is ready to interfere if Syria and Iraq try to help Palestinians"²⁵². Really the

White House was resolute. On September 19 Nixon ordered the US Air Forces deployed in West Germany to be ready for action, while the 6th navy set off for the eastern shores of the Mediterranean.

In order to strike the Syrian tanks a blow from the air, at first, Hussein demanded immediate English and American interference but later he agreed to Israel's interference and provision of American "umbrella".

In those days disagreements emerged between Roger and Kissinger. The former was in favour of joint US and USSR efforts. Convinced that the Syrian invasion was backed by Moscow Kissinger supposed that Jordan crisis had turned into rivalry between the USA and the Soviet Union aimed at setting up zones of influence in the Near East²⁵³. He was sure "unless the United States acted, the crisis would grow deeper and Moscow would take the initiative"²⁵⁴. Kissinger succeeded in convincing Nixon to agree to the Israeli plan according to which only an air raid was not enough and it was necessary to attack the Syrian positions in the District of Irbid by land as well. To realise that plan Kissinger rendered 500 million-dollar worth of assistance to Israel and put 18 Phantom bombers at Israel's disposal.

On September 23 the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs spoke in public criticizing the US attempts of realising military actions and appealing for condemnation the US provocative steps²⁵⁵.

The Syrian tank detachments, left without air support, lost 120 tanks and were forced to retreat. On the same day Hussein informed US Ambassador that Israeli air raids on the territory of Jordan were not needed and that Israel could direct its land actions against Syria²⁵⁶. Yet Israel did not want a land clash with the Syrian army. Washington, in its turn, appreciated the withdrawal of the Syrian troops from Jordan. Three years later Kissinger declared at the US Senate that "the Syrian invasion of Jordan brought us much nearer to the threshold of war than any other much graver crisis"²⁵⁷.

The outcome of the crisis was positively valued by the USA: Hussein remained in power, fidayis had grown extremely weak, the Syrian invasion had been prevented without immediate Israeli or American interference and without Soviet involvement.

²⁴⁷ Y. Dmitriev is the pen-name of Y. Pirlin, a Russian diplomat and expert at Arab studies (1932-2001). He occupied top posts at the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He had to publish his researches under pen-name to avoid undesirable interpretations and diplomatic complexities.

²⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 78

²⁴⁹ International Documents on Palestine, 1970, p. 930.

²⁵⁰ US Foreign Policy for the 1970's. A Report to the Congress by Richard Nixon, February 25, 1974 (US Embassy, Tel-Aviv), p. 127.

²⁵¹ "New York Times", September 21, 1970.

²⁵² "Chicago Sun-Times", September 17, 1970.

²⁵³ H. Kissinger. White House Years. Boston: Little, Brown&Co, 1979, pp. 617-619.

²⁵⁴ *ibid*, pp. 611-612.

²⁵⁵ Black September, Beirut 1971, p. 143.

²⁵⁶ Marvin and Bernard Kalb, Kissinger, p. 204.

²⁵⁷ "The Economist", 19.11.1977.

However, we think that during Jordan crisis American policy-makers overlooked the following two circumstances. First, underestimating the actual motives of the Syrian actions they purely misunderstood the fact that the Syrian invasion of Jordan and the withdrawal of the Syrian troops from there were neither the result of Soviet pressure nor the US's resolute bearing. They were the result of the internal political developments in Syria. The major reason why the Syrian tanks were withdrawn from Jordan was that Assad, aware of the unfavourable conditions of carrying on military actions and the possible grave consequences for the Syrian army, was unwilling to involve the country's air force in "doubtful adventurism". This decision of Assad was undoubtedly influenced by his and Jadid's controversies and rivalry – the failure of the invasion would all the more defame Assad's rival.

There is another viewpoint concerning the reasons for Assad's decision according to which during the invasion of Jordan Assad was already confirmed as the de facto leader of Syria, therefore the tanks could not invade Jordan without Assad's consent. Since Assad did not have any respect for the Palestinians and their leadership he did not want them to bring the war to a triumphant end, and thus become stronger²⁵⁸.

The second lapse of the American policy was that Nixon and Kissinger, considering the events in Jordan from the viewpoint of global confrontation with the USSR, overestimated the Soviet factor and were unable to comprehend that Moscow had but little interest in Jordan, and Moscow's relations with PLO were far from being positive, that Syria was so unstable and unpredictable that in the face of military and economic assistance rendered to Syria by the Soviet Union, the latter had adopted a very cautious policy toward the former. Hence, we consider the statements that Moscow backed the Syrian invasion of Jordan to be groundless. And if we take into consideration the fact that the efforts of American diplomacy were directed towards the USSR as well, it will be quite clear that they could not add anything practical to Moscow's reserved posture.

²⁵⁸ Weinberger, Naomi Jay. *Syrian Intervention in Lebanon: The 1975-76 Civil War*, p. 76.

Hafez al-Assad's Standpoint Towards Arab-Israeli Conflict

After Jordan crisis the USA continued to conduct the policy of maintaining military balance in the region, which was, according to Washington, the key to stability if not to peace. Supplying arms to Israel and Jordan was a priority for the American administration, more important than peacemaking initiatives²⁵⁹.

The relations between the USA and Israel, being of "patron-client" nature, gradually grew into a firm alliance of mutually strategic significance. The USA substantiated the strategic significance of this alliance as follows: Israel could be a strong barrier on the way of permeation of Soviet influence in the region and would be able to protect the "moderate" Arab administrations from "extremist" ones and ensure regional stability. So, for the above-mentioned scruples and, sometimes, without considering the compatibility of the US and Israeli interests in the given case, official Washington rendered serious political, diplomatic and moral assistance to Israel.

After Jordan crisis the dissensions and controversies within the Ba'ath Party in power began to grow deeper and more unyielding in Syria. In order to discuss the current situation in the party elite, on October 30, the 10th Extraordinary Ba'ath Congress was held in Damascus. The agenda of the congress consisted of one urgent issue – discussion of the current situation in the Arab world. Instead, the congress turned into a sharp debate between the party leaders and Assad's adherents.

Assad's speech at the congress is worth mentioning. He said, "After G. Nasser's death we should not be so wasteful as bringing accusations against Israel and playing at extremism. In the future we had better abstain from insecure provocative actions, which can be used by our enemy as a pretext to challenge and involve in a war the Syrian army, which is not yet ready to win"²⁶⁰. Assad's speech aroused the indignation of the right-wing party representatives. They called Assad's speech "defeatist".

²⁵⁹ These deliveries were not significant in 1971, when the USA gave Israel a loan of 545 million dollars to buy ammunition. In 1972-1973 Israel got from its "patron" 300 and 307 million dollars respectively. see R. Karapetian. *US-Syrian relations (1967-1996)*, p. 38.

²⁶⁰ Григорян Г. Позиция Сирии в ближневосточном конфликте, с. 158, H. Grigorian. *The Position of Syria in the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, p. 158.

During the congress it turned out that Assad and his military adherent Mustafa Tlas were completely isolated. When a decision was made to have Assad and Chief of the Officers Tlas dismissed, the latter immediately turned to actions in response²⁶¹.

On November 13 Assad ordered the soldiers to occupy the offices of the right wing as well as those of the "popular organizations" of the Ba'ath majority. Soon the arrests of outstanding party activists including Jadid and President Nur al-Din al-Atassy ensued. By the way Jadid was kept in Mazza prison in Damascus until his death on August 19, 1993, and Nur al-Din al-Atassy was set free only in 1992. On November 16 Assad with his adherents took control of the whole country. On November 13 the statement published by the Transitory Regional Government said, "the aim of such actions is correction of the errors made by previous Ba'ath authorities and consistent realisation of the decisions of party congresses"²⁶².

On November 21 a government of "national unity" headed by Assad was set up. Apart from Ba'ath members the government included some members of other political parties and groups, namely of the Arab Socialist Union and Communist Party. Ahmed al-Khatib was appointed head of the country until the election of the new president.

These events are known in Syria's history as "Corrective Movement of November 16".

In modern history of Syria the fourth phase began – the phase of H. Assad's power, which lasted 30 years, until his death in 2000. The years of Assad's power are given different assessments – from extreme negative to quite positive. A centralized totalitarian system was set up in the country, and for the time being the country had no alternative, considering its socio-economic and political peculiarities. The principles of "democracy and human rights", so vital for the West, could not be priorities for a country in war, a country that has had a different historic-cultural development and is badly in need of stability. Moreover, H. Assad represented the Alavi minority of the country, hence both his home and foreign policy was to take that fact

into account. For him stability of power was of greater value than "the vortex of democracy unknown to the Syrians"²⁶³.

Thus, the major achievement of Assad's power was stability, which enabled the authorities to realise reforms in the country. This research does not aim at illustrating Syria's internal political problems and interpreting the policy followed by the administration. We are going to focus on Damascus' policy in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Some analysts of Syrian studies (mainly Western and Israeli) charge H. Assad with "supporting terrorism", "being the major cause of instability in the region" and other errors. Yet all the analysts admit that during H. Assad's reign Syria gained an unprecedented reputation in the Arab world and undertook a leading role in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Assad came to power at a moment that was crucial not only for his country but also for the whole Arab world, at a moment when, after Nasser's death, Arab countries were divided, and the strategic cooperation of the USA and Israel was growing closer and firmer.

Having come to power Assad took up the creation of organisational substructures of the government as well as the work of setting up centralized control. The Ba'ath Transitory Regional Government set up a legislative body, National Council, consisting of 173 members. Ba'ath occupied 97 seats in the newly-formed council. The remaining seats were distributed among "national organisations" and minor parties. In March 1971, Ba'ath held a regional congress and elected a new regional government consisting of 21 members headed by Assad. In the same month a national plebiscite took place as a result of which Assad was elected President of the country for 7 years. In March 1972, Assad founded coalition of parties – National Progressive Front – headed by Ba'ath. This was followed by the elections of local authorities in 14 states of Syria. Then, for the first time since 1962, the elections of the country's legislative body, National Council, were held. The period of 1970-1973 can be briefly characterized as a period of strengthening of Assad's power, shaping the system of governing, founding the legislative and legal systems, working out the country's home and foreign policy.

In that period, in 1973, the country adopted its basic law, which fixed the rule of the Ba'ath party in the state and society providing for

²⁶¹ "Al-Ray", 1970, November 14 and 17.

²⁶² Современная Сирия. Справочник, с. 224. Modern Syria. Encyclopedia, p.224

²⁶³ Мир глазами президента Сирии Хафеза Асада. Сборник речей и выступлений, с. 26. The World by the Eyes of the President of Syria Hafez Assad, Speeches and Interviews, p.26

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²⁶¹ "Al-Ray", 1970, November 14 and 17.

²⁶² Современная Сирия. Справочник, с. 224. Modern Syria. Encyclopedia, p.224

²⁶³ Мир глазами президента Сирии Хафеза Асада. Сборник речей и выступлений, с. 26. The World by the Eyes of the President of Syria Hafez Assad, Speeches and Interviews, p.26

President's broad rights and declaring President to be Commander-in-Chief of Syria's Armed Forces.

Washington closely watched the changes going on in Syria. Before acceding to power Assad repeatedly criticized Jadid's government for being "communist" and influenced by the USSR. Even in an interview to British "Daily Telegraph" on March 17, 1969, Assad connected all the internal and external hardships of his country with the USSR. Therefore, the West, particularly the USA, began to cherish hopes that Assad might adopt a more favourable and balanced policy towards them.

However, Assad did not come up to the West's expectations. Moreover, having acceded to power he immediately stated his intentions of "strengthening their ties with the countries of the socialist camp, in particular, with the friendly Soviet Union" and he included two communists in the newly-formed Regional Government²⁶⁴. It must be pointed out that continually stressing the fact of being a strategic ally of Moscow and promoting the Syria-USSR relations, Assad, nevertheless, avoided rendering any ideological shade to those relations.

Disappointed at the power shift in Syria, the USA came up with two initiatives. The first was "Yaring's Mission". For about a year Ambassador Gunar Yaring made efforts to act as go-between in resuming the Egypt-Israeli negotiations. The second initiative was based on the concept of "interim regulation". In 1971 both initiatives failed.

The USA's policy towards Syria, first of all, aimed at obstructing the rapprochement between Moscow and Damascus, as well as preventing the realisation of the plans of the new Syrian government to set up a single united Arab front.

As far as in 1968, November 8, US State Secretary Dean Rusk had a meeting with Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mahmoud Riad, during which the US Secretary of State suggested discussing the problem of withdrawal of Israeli troops from Egypt completely. This was counter to Resolution 242 of UN Security Council in terms of which Israel was to withdraw its troops from all the occupied Arab lands. The intention of the USA was to disrupt the unity of the extremist Arab front by concluding separate Egypt-Israeli, Syria-Israeli, Jordan-Israeli agreements. Later

Kissinger, in his turn, skillfully tried to sow seeds of dissension in the Egypt-Syrian relations²⁶⁵.

Though Kissinger's plan to obstruct rapprochement between Moscow and the Arabs and even to urge the Arabs to break all the ties with Moscow failed in the case of Syria, it was a success in the case of Egypt, when, in 1972, Anvar Sadat expelled all the Soviet specialists.

Without considering the 10-item Memorandum signed with the USSR in May 1972, which read "the two countries take up the responsibility to do their best in order to exclude clashes and such consequences that could intensify international tension", the USA, following the "delay" policy, gradually increased its military aid to Israel²⁶⁶. As for the USSR, it remained loyal to the provisions of the Memorandum and rejected Sadat's request to supply most up-to-date military equipment to Egypt.

This refusal as well as some delay of the delivery of military equipment merely served as a pretext for Sadat to expel about 10 thousand Soviet specialists from the country. Y. Primakov comments on this step of Sadat as the continuation of the "big game" initiated by the USA and Egypt²⁶⁷.

In the sphere of inter-Arab relations Syria's new administration strove to put an end to the country's isolation and strengthen its position in the Arab world. Unlike Jadid, Assad made steps toward rapprochement with Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia in order to form a joint military front against Israel. In November 1970, Syria acceded to the Tripoli Charter of Egypt, Libya and Sudan. The Charter envisaged creation of a united Arab state. On April 17, 1971, they declared the Alliance of Arab Republics, whose goal was "to preserve the integrity and independence of the Arab home-country, build a socialist Arab society, liberate the occupied Arab lands, reinforce the Arabs' national-liberation struggle"²⁶⁸.

H. Assad referred to Palestine problem and inter-Arab cooperation on November 16, 1970, in his first programmatic speech in which he correlated the country's agenda of home policy with the line of foreign policy: "It is necessary to cooperate widely with all the progressive Arab

²⁶⁴ Damascus Domestic Service, November 16, 1970

²⁶⁵ Riad, Mahmoud, *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East*, p. 282

²⁶⁶ US Foreign Policy, 1972. A Report of the Secretary of State, April 1973, pp. 598-903

²⁶⁷ Примаков Е. М. История одного сговора, с. 38-39, Primakov Y. *The History of One Deal*. P.38-39.

²⁶⁸ Современная Сирия. Справочник, с. 230. *Modern Syria*, p.230.

countries. This cooperation will reinforce the strategy of our military struggle and will guarantee the Arab forces' involvement in the struggle for freedom. It will promote assistance to the Palestine revolution and unity among the ranks of the Palestinian Resistance"²⁶⁹.

The Syrian leader was confident that the basic requisite for peace was not the return of the Golans but "restoration of the rights of the Arab people in our Palestine"²⁷⁰. According to Assad only the realization of two conditions would ensure peace – the return of all the Arab lands occupied by Israel and acknowledgement of the Palestinian people's right by means of creating a Palestinian state.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that US President J. Carter was impressed by a picture hanging in Assad's study. The picture depicted the historic Battle of Hattin, 1187, when the Crusaders were defeated and Jerusalem was occupied by Saladin. "While speaking about the Arab-Israeli conflict and Palestine problem Assad made an impression that he considered himself to be a modern Saladin and he thought it his duty to free the region from foreign presence and to preserve Damascus as the central point of Arab unity"²⁷¹. Sure enough Assad remained loyal to that "duty" to the end of his life. At least no one can deny the consistency and continuity of his policy concerning the problem of the Arab-Israeli conflict or that of Arab unity.

Assad's first step towards the Arab-Israeli conflict was the revision of one of the important items in Syria's foreign policy. For instance, UN resolution 242 of 1967 was continually rejected by the Syrian authorities but in March 1972, Assad stated that he was not going to oppose the resolution any longer. Assad substantiated his diplomatic step as follows: "Sometimes political maneuvering is important for the efforts aimed at war, for example, to appease the opinion of the international community or to gain time"²⁷².

Assad's consent to this resolution did not at all mean conciliation with Israel. He did not think that it would be possible to settle Palestine problem or to regain the Golans through political-diplomatic channels. He was sure that it was possible to succeed in defeating Israel only with superior

military force. To counter-balance the large-scale American aid to Israel Assad tried to increase the import of Soviet arms. In July 1972, Assad visited Moscow for the second time. During this visit a military deal of 700 million dollars was signed²⁷³.

Assad's standpoint was well grounded. Acting as the "owner", Israel started the construction of new Jewish settlements on the Golan Heights. By 1976 25 Jewish settlements had been constructed in the Golans where the number of native Druzes was 15000²⁷⁴. In 1969 the Israeli government published a project according to which about 50000 Jews would have settled down in the Golans by 1979. The project also stipulated for the construction of a new town in the center of the Golans, with a population of 30000²⁷⁵.

Apart from this there was such a hostile atmosphere towards Syria in Israel that the leaders of Israel publicly compared the Syrians with the "Nazis" calling them the enemies of the Jewish state, "of freedom and peace"²⁷⁶. Israeli leaders did not even conceal their intention of not returning the Golans no matter who was in power in Syria.

For the first time since the war in 1967 Syria attacked the Israeli positions in the Golans in August 1969. It was followed by an Israeli counter-attack on the Palestinian bases in Syria and Lebanon. During this attack Israel managed to destroy 3 Syrian Mig-21 fighters. On June 8 and June 24 as a result of the clashes between the Syrian and Israeli forces "hundreds of soldiers were killed and wounded", the Israeli troops took 38 Syrian prisoners and hit 4 Syrian planes²⁷⁷. Sure of its military superiority Israel adopted a policy of intensifying military actions with the aim of putting pressure on Damascus to quit the intention of unleashing a war. Israel also meant "to teach Damascus a lesson and "to restrain" the Palestinians"²⁷⁸.

On September 7, 1972, Israel made a massive air attack on Syria and Lebanon, in which 55 Israeli planes took part. The attack resulted in 5 victims (children) and 27 wounded in the camp of Nahr al-Bared in North Lebanon. During the bombardment of the Syrian village of al-Mazalib 55

²⁶⁹ The struggle of the Ba'ath Party in 1943-1975, Damascus, 1978, pp. 119-120

²⁷⁰ Мир глазами президента Сирии Хафеза Асада. Сборник речей и выступлений, с. 59-61 The World by the Eyes of the President of Syria Hafez Assad, Speeches and Interviews, pp. 59-61.

²⁷¹ Carter, Jimmy. Palestine Peace not Apartheid, p. 80

²⁷² "Al-Nahar", Lebanese daily, 17.03.1979

²⁷³ Communist Foreign Aid to Arab Countries since 1955, N 96, 8 June, 1967, DD 139E, 1980

²⁷⁴ Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. XII, No. 1, 1977

²⁷⁵ "Davar", 03.12.1971 /Israeli newspaper published till May 1996/

²⁷⁶ "Divrei haknesset" – 59.147; 16.10.1970

²⁷⁷ M. Maoz, Ibid, p. 117

²⁷⁸ "New York Times", December 8, 1972

inhabitants were killed and 125 were wounded. The attack on the villages of Deras and Hama resulted in 14 and 12 victims respectively²⁷⁹.

According to the daily "al Maharir" published in Beirut the attacks were realized by American pilots, who were later granted Israeli citizenship. The daily states that they were skilled pilots of Jewish nationality who had fought in Vietnam and who had entered Israel as tourists²⁸⁰.

On the one hand, Washington publicly expressed concern about the situation in the Near East, "the relative truce in the Middle East agreed to with great difficulty and lasting for two years can be broken at any moment", on the other hand, it continued assisting Israel economically, politically and diplomatically, often running counter to the UN resolutions²⁸¹.

In February 1972, USSR First Vice Prime Minister K. Mazurov, visited Syria. During this visit Mazurov accused the USA of "striving to eliminate the progressive administrations and creating an explosive situation" in the region²⁸². On September 24 the Lebanese newspaper "Al-Nahar" wrote, "Big planes arrived in Syria from Moscow. They must have brought missiles of "land-air" type for the Syrian army"²⁸³.

Bringing global confrontation into the region and continuing to arm their "clients" the superpowers promoted its polarization and intensified the Arab-Israeli crisis.

Syria's Participation in the "October" War in 1973

American policy showed certain signs of activation in February 1973, when two visits followed each other: King Hussein of Jordan visited Washington and then Egypt's President of Sadat's advisor on security Hafiz Ismail went there. However, the assassination of the American Ambassador and Deputy Ambassador in Khartoum distracted the attention of the US Department of State from Jordanian and Egyptian fronts focusing it on

²⁷⁹ "The Egyptian Gazette", 09.09.1972

²⁸⁰ "Al-Muharrar al-Arabi", 22.02.1972

²⁸¹ On December 1972, the UN General Assembly with 86 votes for and 7 against (including the USA) appealed to the member-countries to abstain from rendering assistance to Israel as it could be used to keep the occupied areas.

²⁸² "Al-Baath", 22.02.1972

²⁸³ "Al-Nahar", 24.09.1972

"Palestinian terrorism". It is clear that the murder of 11 Israeli sportsmen in Munich Olympic Games in September 1972, and that of the Prime Minister of Jordan in November could not promote new American initiatives.

In 1973 the USA faced another problem, the problem of oil. In a situation when the USA experienced shortage of gas and oil there were calls in Saudi Arabia for using the oil factor as pressure on Washington thus promoting withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the occupied Arab lands.

Sadat, in his turn, expelled the Soviet specialists mistakenly thinking that after it Washington would revise its policy in the region and would provide "the return of the Arab lands"²⁸⁴. Not receiving any practical and distinct response from Washington and learning about Nixon's decision to realize new military deliveries to Israel, Sadat finally got confirmed in his opinion that only new "successful" but "limited" military actions could activate the process of negotiations and bring the Egypt-Israeli relations to some settlement²⁸⁵. On March 26, 1973, Sadat formed a "war" government headed by himself. Three days later he declared, "the war with Israel is inevitable"²⁸⁶.

Damascus' attitude to the expulsion of the Soviet specialists from Egypt was neutral as they considered it to be Egypt's home affair. Assad made no attempt to take advantage of the situation, moreover, he became a kind of a go-between to reconcile Moscow and Cairo and to settle their disagreements. Being a "composed and balanced" politician Assad publicly supported military actions against Israel trying, at the same time, to make use of all the possible political and diplomatic ways and means (chiefly through Moscow) to direct US pressure towards Israel. On Assad's advice Sadat had to postpone the war until June 1973, when Brezhnev and Nixon met.

The USSR warned that a war was likely to break out in the Arab East, but Nixon and Kissinger²⁸⁷ considered this warning to be "psychological pressure" and refused to cooperate with Moscow with the aim of peaceful settlement²⁸⁸. The diplomatic channel of settling the problem with Israel was ultimately closed on July 13 when UN Security Council was discussing a resolution, which condemned the continual occupation of the

²⁸⁴ "Middle East Journal", No. 27, 1973, pp. 192-193

²⁸⁵ The USA sent 36 "Skyhawk" and 48 "Phantom" planes to Israel.

²⁸⁶ "Newsweek", April 9, 1973

²⁸⁷ H. Kissinger was appointed US Secretary of State on August 22, 1973

²⁸⁸ Kissinger H. Years of Upheaval, p. 461

Arab lands, by Israel. China abstained from voting, considering the resolution too soft, while the USA voted against it thus obstructing its adoption. It was clear for Syria and Egypt that Resolution 242 of the UN was going to have the same fate – American veto.

Having lost all hopes of peaceful settlement Assad also stepped on the road of war. In the first half of 1973 Syria got 200 million dollars' worth of ammunition, which was twice as much as the previous year's. At the end of June Syria's and Egypt's Presidents worked out a plan known as "Badr".

In August the Syrian and Egyptian military commands met secretly in Alexandria and in Bludan to amplify some details in the coming war with Israel. On September 6 the Imam of Damascus Great Mosque announced "Jihad" against Israel.

On September 13 an air battle took place, when Israeli planes tried to make spy flights above the Syrian military objects. 13 Syrian planes were hit while Israel lost only one²⁸⁹. It must be noted that this incident, too, affected Assad's decision to wage war.

On September 25 King Hussein of Jordan secretly warned Israeli Prime Minister Meyir that Syria and Egypt were going to attack Israel²⁹⁰. But, as Kissinger puts it, Israeli and American leaders shared the opinion that "From the military viewpoint Egypt and Syria were unable to regain the Arab lands by force"²⁹¹.

The USA ignored the warnings on the eve of the war in 1973. The military actions, begun on October 6, 1973, were unexpected not only for Washington, but for Tel-Aviv as well. Though both the USA and Israel had plenty of information about the military preparations and maneuvers of the Syrian and Egyptian troops, they were unable to carry out precise analysis of the intelligence data at their disposal and arrive at a definite conclusion.

One of the reasons for such carelessness might have been the extreme self-confidence gained after the war in 1967. The American view was as follows, "Only when the Arabs are deprived of all the opportunities to exert military and political pressure upon Israel, they will put aside their pride and will have to admit the fact of the superiority of Israeli arms"²⁹². The war that broke out on October 6, 1973, came to prove just the opposite, i.e.

²⁸⁹ "New York Times", September 14, 1973

²⁹⁰ "Yediot Ahronot", 15.09.1973

²⁹¹ Kissinger H. Years of Upheaval, p. 455-458

²⁹² "London Observer", July 29, 1973

the American policy (adopted in 1967) of "military balance" was absolutely incomplete and inefficient.

Not going into the details of the war and separate military actions on both Egyptian and Syrian fronts we must note that because of the war Syria suffered more losses than Egypt did. Despite the success at the beginning of the war the Syrians not only were unable to liberate the occupied areas but they lost more areas (600 sq. km) as well. Syria suffered not only heavy military but also civil and economic losses, the Israeli air force seriously damaged Syrian economic and civil objects. The devastating defeat upset and humiliated the Syrians more than the Egyptians.

It must be mentioned that Assad turned out to be more consistent in his uncompromising bearing towards Israel than Sadat was. The latter considered the war of 1973 to be a preliminary step towards future negotiations and peacemaking process whereas Assad waged war chiefly because he wanted to regain the Golans and punish Israel. Sadat's goal was winning a trump card in a limited war, a card, which would be used in the future negotiations while Assad wanted to wage war on a large scale in order to get back Sinai and the Golans. After the war the relations between Syria and Egypt grew cold. A major reason for it was Assad's accusation that the Egyptians, counter to previous arrangement, having crossed the line of Bar Lev did not advance immediately thus enabling Israel to concentrate its troops on the Syrian front and stop the advance of the Syrian troops in the Golans. The Golans were much more important than the Sinai Peninsula. That was why Israel was fighting more resolutely and stubbornly on the Syrian front.

Assad held the opinion that "Sadat was not sincere with Syria and was exercising the worst kind of cooperation"²⁹³.

US State Secretary Cyrus Vance who succeeded H. Kissinger noted that "Sadat pursued mainly political and diplomatic goals in the war"²⁹⁴. Kissinger mentioned that during the war Sadat had activated his secret ties with the Americans. "As for the Syrians, we did not have any direct contact with them"²⁹⁵, says Kissinger.

²⁹³ Примаков Е. М. История одного сговора, с. 47 Y. Primakov. The History of One Deal, p. 47.

²⁹⁴ Vance C. Hard Choices. Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy, p. 161

²⁹⁵ Kissinger H. Years of Upheaval, p. 574

However, the October war was of significant importance for the whole region and for the Arab world. First of all it restored the Arabs' self-confidence lost after the war in 1967. The Arab countries managed to disperse the myth about the military invincibility of Israel. Partial self-confidence regained by the Arabs subsequently made it possible to conclude Egypt-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli agreements on "not waging war". A number of historians often underline the fact of Arab unity during the war. It must be admitted that the Arab world won a "psychological" victory in the war though it can hardly be regarded as a victory of Arab unity.

Indeed, Syria and Egypt fought against Israel "together" yet they not only failed to open another front but owing to different goals they pursued in the war, they could not cooperate efficiently either, and were defeated from the military viewpoint. During the war the Arab countries managed to use the oil factor as a political weapon yet not without dissensions concerning the expediency of continuing or stopping the embargo, etc. That is the reason why statements about Arab unity seem to us exaggerated. It is worth mentioning what Assad said in reply to the question why the one hundred million Arab people with their money, oil and arms was always defeated by the two and a half-million Jews. This is what Assad said: "Those one hundred million Arabs never fought, even one iota of the Arab revolution did not fight, Arab oil did not fight either. As soon as one hundred million Arabs, Arab oil and the Arab revolution fight together, victory will be ours"²⁹⁶.

According to Kissinger after the war the USA initiated the policy "of revising alliances" in the region. Washington seemed to realize that mere Israel's military superiority could not ensure stability in the region. The oil embargo successfully carried out against the USA had its effect here²⁹⁷.

The October war played a decisive role in the revision of the American policy in the Middle East. Moreover, it opened new perspectives for the development of Syria-American relations. The major change in the American policy was Kissinger's rejection of the so-called "package solution" and adoption of the "step-by-step" policy. During the war Kissinger was sure that in case they passed on to the "step-by-step" policy and managed

²⁹⁶ "Al-Anwar" /Lebanese Daily/, 10.08.1972.

²⁹⁷ On October 20, 1973, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia announced that he reduced oil export and prohibits the sale of oil to the USA thus initiating the oil embargo carried on by Arab countries due to which the oil price went up from 5.12 to 11.65 American dollars for a barrel.

to conclude an Egypt-Israeli agreement, Syria would follow the example, Jordan and Lebanon as well.

After the war the American policy towards Syria changed. Washington gradually began to admit the importance of Syria's role in the Arab-Israeli conflict as well as Assad's personal influence in the region.

Assad, too, was sure that as long as it was impossible to realize the return of the Arab lands by force, the peaceful solution to that problem was possible only with Washington's help. As F. Ajamy says, "Assad's administration was in deadlock. The noise he made was of extremist nature while his policy was essentially conservative"²⁹⁸.

In 1967-1973 the Syria-American relations were, in fact, non-existent, there were no direct contacts between the two states and neither of them intended to make any practical step towards improving them. Syria and the USA were of different statuses in opposing camps. This circumstance made it impossible for them to find ways of rapprochement. The situation was all the more complicated because of the USA and Israel's strategic cooperation, which was growing closer day by day, on the one hand, and the Soviet "patronage" that Syria enjoyed, on the other hand. All this hindered the improvement of the Syria-American relations intensifying polarization in the region. As a result of the October war in 1973 a new correlation of forces was set up in the Arab world, and this compelled Washington to alter its policy towards Syria to some extent thus creating real prerequisites for rapprochement.

Damascus' Place in H. Kissinger's "Step-by-Step" Policy

Immediately after the war of 1973 the peace-making efforts of the USA acting as go-between grew active in the Middle East. Nixon and Kissinger were aware of the serious threat to the US vital interests posed by the situation in the region. The situation was convenient from all aspects for the USA to come up with a new peacemaking initiative. The war resulted in Israel's isolation in the international sphere and its growing dependence on the United States. The Arab world was sure as long as the Soviet Union

²⁹⁸ The Middle East and the Western Alliance. Ed. Steven L. Spiegel, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1982, p. 150

supplied arms the USA could make Israel compromise by giving up the occupied areas²⁹⁹.

Kissinger was to carry out a difficult mediatory mission. He was to follow "balanced" policy towards the Arabs and at the same time, to assure Israel that no solution counter to its interests would be arrived at. Apart from this Kissinger's task was to convince the Arabs that the USA's efforts were not dictated by the oil embargo. Considering the political situation inside the USA Kissinger deemed it necessary to ensure public support, as well as to avoid open arguments with Israel. To put it in a nutshell, Kissinger's diplomatic mission aimed at peaceful settlement in the Near East, without sacrificing Israel's interests, as well as at limiting the Soviet Union's influence in the region and improving the USA's relations with the Arab world.

In a situation, when the Arabs demanded immediate withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the occupied territories while Israel was trying to gain time, Kissinger suggested the idea of holding an international conference under the aegis of which further diplomatic steps would be discussed and a framework of negotiations would be created.

Though American leaders attached more importance to their relations with Egypt they gradually realized Syria's important role in the process of peaceful settlement. Perhaps this was the main reason why Americans tried to contact Syrians. On November 1 Nixon had a meeting with Israel's Prime Minister Meir, during which Nixon remarked, "The USA shall try to improve its relations with Egypt and Syria"³⁰⁰. However, apart from a few official meetings there was no constantly operating channel of mutual communication.

On November 5 within the framework of Kissinger's new policy the visit to Morocco set about the so-called "shuttle diplomacy". Besides re-establishing bilateral friendly relations with Morocco Kissinger's visit was meant "to pave the way to Syria and the Palestinians"³⁰¹. In the same month Kissinger visited Saudi Arabia and asked King Faisal to render assistance "with getting in touch" with Syria³⁰².

²⁹⁹ "Al-Ahram", /Egyptian daily/, 16.11.1973

³⁰⁰ Golan, Matti. *The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger*, p. 111

³⁰¹ Quandt W. *Decade of Decisions*, p. 216

³⁰² Sheehan, Edward. *The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger*, pp. 70-73

In December 1973, Kissinger undertook his second visit to the region during which he went to Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Israel. Syria and Israel refused to take part in the conference. Israel was against holding the conference under the auspices of the UN General Secretary. It did not agree to the presence of the Palestinians at the conference and demanded that Syria hand them the list of the POW's and allow the representatives of the International Red Cross to visit them.

Combining pressure and promises Kissinger managed to persuade the Israelites to participate in the conference, but during his visit to Damascus on December 15 Kissinger's efforts failed.

It must be noted that the meeting with Assad made a deep impression on Kissinger. The Syrian leader appeared to be well-informed, intelligent and witty. Kissinger was surprised to find out that, contrary to his expectations, Assad proved to be a "moderate" politician and "did not look like a person who obediently performed the orders of the Soviet Union"³⁰³.

During the meeting, which lasted six and a half hours instead of 2 and a half, Assad told the US Secretary of State that the Syrian side was not going to take part in the conference and added that Syria would participate in the conference provided that an agreement was concluded with Israel on separating the whole area of the Golans. Assad also mentioned that the settlement of the problem was impossible without solving the Palestinian problem emphasizing the fact that the problem of the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from all the Arab areas was not clearly and distinctly stated. Assad refused to hand the list of the Israeli prisoners of the war to Kissinger either.

Though Kissinger could not achieve any noticeable result concerning Syrian-Israeli relations, definite progress in the Syria-American relations was recorded. During Kissinger's visit it was arranged to open a diplomatic mission in Damascus "that would defend American interests".

After leaving for Tel-Aviv Kissinger continued making attempts to influence Syrians. Thus Kissinger informed Assad through Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs Fahmy that in return for the POW list Israel was ready to allow the peasants to return to those Syrian areas, which were under Israel's control. The US Ambassador left Beirut for Damascus to pass the same proposal to Assad in person. On December 18 Kissinger got Assad's final

³⁰³ Quandt W., *ibid*, p. 222

reply, "Syria will not participate in the current stage of the negotiations in Geneva, yet the possibility of Syria's participation later is not excluded"³⁰⁴.

On December 21, 1973, the Peace Congress devoted to the Middle East began in Geneva. The participants of the first phase were UN General Secretary K. Waldheim, USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Gromyko, US Secretary of State Kissinger, Egypt's, Jordan's and Israel's Ministers of Foreign Affairs. The official reason for the Syrian representative's absence was that under the circumstances the Congress could not promote the settlement of the Arab problem.

Despite Assad and Sadat's preliminary arrangement to coordinate their standpoints and steps, Egypt's Minister of Foreign Affairs Fahmy, on the one hand, openly demanded the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from all the occupied Arab areas, on the other hand, through active US mediations, tried hard to speed up the conclusion of an agreement on the separation of the Egypt-Israeli troops. According to the daily "Al-Akhbar" "Egypt's government energetically strives to improve the relations with the USA and consequently we can lose what we have gained"³⁰⁵.

Eventually, on January 18, 1974, under the aegis of Washington, Egypt and Israel concluded an agreement on the Separation of Forces, according to which the Israeli troops were withdrawn from the West Bank of the Suez Canal and retreated 20 km³⁰⁶.

Thus, the Peace Congress in Geneva substituted the principle of the "complete withdrawal" of the Israeli troops for that of "the separation of the troops", which resulted in "partial settlement" instead of complete settlement of the Middle Eastern crisis.

By the conclusion of the Egypt-Israeli Agreement within the framework of the "step-by-step" policy Kissinger succeeded in weakening the united Arab front, definitely raising the rating of the USA in the Arab world and, what is more important, paving the way to the conclusion of a subsequent Syrian-Israeli Agreement.

It was relatively easy for Kissinger to achieve the Egypt-Israeli Agreement whereas the Syrian-Israeli Agreement required great efforts and consistency on his part³⁰⁷.

The USA's interest in the conclusion of the Syrian-Israeli Agreement can, perhaps, be explained by the fact that it (the agreement) would, first of all, provide the realization of the already concluded Egypt-Israeli Agreement and promote further development of the Egypt-American relations. Otherwise, if Syria had failed to conclude that agreement, Sadat's position in the Arab world would have grown weaker, and the "extremist" Arab countries would have been granted favourable conditions to grow influential in the region. As a result of such developments it would have been possible to resume the military actions, which would have involved Egypt as well. Besides the danger of unleashing a war, the situation would have made the Middle East, more than ever, yearn for the USSR's active presence and interference. And last but not least, without the Syrian-Israeli Agreement it would have been possible for the oil embargo to be repeated.

To comment on the US standpoint concerning the Syrian-Israeli Agreement we should turn to the records of the Israeli journalist Matti Golan. Those are the records of Kissinger's secret talks in Israel and present considerable interest. According to one of them, in December 1973, Kissinger stated, "The real aim of the current negotiations on concluding a separate agreement with Syria is to avoid conducting negotiations on the problem of borders and that of final settlement". According to the Secretary of State, such an agreement would have resulted in another gain-end of the oil embargo. It would have put an end to Israel's isolation and would have eased the pressure of Japan and West European countries on Israel³⁰⁸. It is evident that besides the problem of the oil embargo Kissinger was interested in such a solution to the Golans problem in terms of which the Israeli troops would have been withdrawn only from those Arab areas, which were occupied during the war of 1973. Anyway, the agenda of Kissinger's Middle Eastern policy consisted of two urgent issues – conclusion of a Syrian-Israeli Agreement and putting an end to the oil embargo.

³⁰⁴ Kissinger H. Years of Upheaval, pp. 755-781

³⁰⁵ "Al-Akhbar", 22.19.1973

³⁰⁶ «Внешняя политика Советского Союза», с. 326. "The Foreign Policy of the Soviet Union", p.326.

³⁰⁷ In general Kissinger has spent around 34 days and 120 hours in negotiations with Syrian leadership. W. R. Polk. The Arab World Today, p. 423.

³⁰⁸ Golan M. The Secret Conversations of Henry Kissinger, p. 152

Moscow was no less interested in the conclusion of the Syrian-Israeli Agreement, for Syria was in a state of permanent war being the only Arab country on the front opposing Israel. This fact caused its "patron" constant headaches since in the case of the renewal of military actions the "patron" would have been compelled to interfere directly in a war with unpredictable consequences. From this viewpoint, the conclusion of the Syrian-Israeli Agreement was favourable for the USSR. Primakov observes that some of the provisions of the Agreement were changed in favour of Syria and were acceptable owing to the active mediation of the Soviet Union³⁰⁹. The daily "Al-Akhbar" writes, "The conclusion of the Agreement on the separation of the troops by Egypt put Syria in a predicament. Yet it was supported by the progressive Arab forces – Algeria, Iraq as well as the Soviet Union and all the peace-loving and socialist countries"³¹⁰.

It seemed Assad, too, was willing to conclude the agreement and compromise. If in December 1973 he demanded the complete withdrawal of the Israeli forces from the Golans, only a month later, on January 20, 1974, during the second meeting with Kissinger, Assad demanded the liberation of half the Golans, Kuneitra and the areas occupied in 1973³¹¹.

By the way, during the negotiations Assad successfully used the issue of the Israeli POWs as a trump card.

It can be considered Assad's victory when, on February 3, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia made an announcement according to which the oil embargo would continue until the agreement on the separation of the Syrian and Israeli troops was signed.

In answer to this the Department of State declared, "As long as the oil embargo continues the USA will not be able to continue the diplomatic efforts"³¹². Nevertheless, on February 5 the USA put forward a proposal of 5 items – according to which, in case Syria passed the list of the Israeli POWs to the American Mission in Damascus, Israel would come up with the draft of the agreement. After the representatives of the International Red Cross had visited the POWs in Syria, Kissinger suggested inviting the Syrian and Israeli delegations to Washington to start the negotiations. Later negotiations were

³⁰⁹ Примаков Е. М. История одного сговора: (Ближневосточная политика США в 70-е начале 80-х годов), с. 69. Y. Primakov. The History of One Deal. p. 69

³¹⁰ "Al-Akhbar" 20.04.197, p. 37

³¹¹ *ibid*

³¹² Quandt W. Decade of Decisions, p. 231

to be conducted in Geneva, within the framework of the operating Egypt-Israeli military working team. On February 9, Assad consented to the American suggestion³¹³.

A week later the leaders of four Arab countries – Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Syria – met in Algeria. The agenda of the summit meeting consisted of the following items; oil embargo, the Arab countries' standpoint towards the USA, separation of the troops on the Syrian front. Yet there emerged dissensions concerning the continuation of the oil embargo. Egypt and Saudi Arabia opposed Syria and Algeria insisting on the cease of the embargo. The debates ended in compromise: Assad temporarily gave up his demand of stopping the embargo.

The decision of the Arab countries to continue the oil embargo infuriated the US leaders. In fact the solution to the problem of vital importance for Washington was again postponed for an indefinite period. Realising that policy could not be conditioned by the oil factor, Kissinger had to continue his mission directed toward the conclusion of the Syrian-Israeli agreement.

Unaware how far Sadat had carried his "game" with the Americans, Assad made a few unsuccessful attempts at creating a Cairo-Damascus military political alliance³¹⁴. He repeatedly emphasized the importance of Arab unity in their actions, particularly the unity of Egypt and Syria "to fight against the common enemy"³¹⁵.

Some political scientists interpret Assad's consent to conclude an agreement with Israel merely as a step towards improving relations with the USA. We can partly agree to this viewpoint since doing so Damascus was trying hard "to gain the friendship of a superpower and thus to neutralize or, at least, reduce the assistance rendered by that superpower to Syria's immediate enemy"³¹⁶. At the same time we deem it necessary to add that by concluding the agreement with Israel Assad was perhaps striving to prevent the conclusion of a separate Egypt-Israeli agreement, as well as to impede the elaboration and realization of separate joint regional policy by the USA and Egypt.

³¹³ *ibid*, p. 231

³¹⁴ "Al-Ahram", 05.07.1974. From the interview with Assad.

³¹⁵ "Al-Ahram weekly", 29.04.1974

³¹⁶ *ibid*

We must note that there were serious dissensions among the leading circles of Syria concerning the "step-by-step" policy. The "extremist" wing headed by Minister of Foreign Affairs Khaddam rejected the idea of concluding partial agreements. This standpoint was substantiated by the situation when the correlation of forces, as well as the economic and military balance had changed in favour of the Arabs, and under the circumstances there was a chance of complete settlement of the conflict with Israel in favour of Syria. Khaddam was worried that peace established under the aegis of the Americans could put an end to the Arab revolution. He also rejected the idea of direct negotiations with Israel³¹⁷.

The second group of the Syrian leadership headed by Prime Minister M. Ayubi supported conclusion of an agreement on separation. Ayubi held the opinion that the outcome of the war was satisfactory for Syria so it was necessary to take advantage of the possibilities of the step-by-step policy to enhance in practice what they had gained.

Assad managed to observe the golden mean: "shuttle diplomacy" enabled them to avoid direct negotiations with Israel while the conclusion of an agreement on separation made it possible, without giving up the idea of complete settlement, to compel Israel to yield as much as possible in the case of the Golans.

As for the United States, Nixon was feverishly looking for ways and means to gain something tangible, as quickly as possible, in the sphere of foreign policy in order to reduce the consequences of the Watergate scandal inside the country. Therefore, the US President pressed Kissinger to put an end to the Arab countries' oil embargo and speed up conclusion of the Syrian-Israeli Agreement.

The first problem was solved at the meeting held in Tripoli on March 18, when the majority of the oil-producing Arab countries supported the decision of putting an end to the embargo. This aroused Damascus' negative reaction.

As for the second problem, in order to receive Moscow's support to the conclusion of the Syrian-Israeli Agreement Kissinger had a "hard and unpleasant" meeting with Brezhnev. During the meeting Brezhnev accused the Americans of keeping Moscow away from the negotiation process, but it

³¹⁷ Khaddam said, "I do not want to tell my son that his father sat at the same table with the Zionists to conduct peace negotiations". See "New York Times", 06.01.1974, p. 10.

was decided that in the nearest future first the representatives of Israel, then those of Syria would go to Washington to discuss the possibilities of concluding an agreement. After that Kissinger was to visit the Near East, then the sides were to meet in Geneva and sign the agreement in the presence of the USSR.

In terms of this arrangement on March 29 Israel's Minister of Defense Moshe Dayan went to Washington, then Syria's Brigadier-General Hikmet Shihaby visited Washington. The standpoints of the parties concerning the separation line of the troops noticeably differed. If Dayan suggested drawing the separation line to the East of the line of October six providing the presence of the Israeli troops in El-Kunaitra, Shihaby produced a map on which the separation line was drawn to the West of Kunaitra providing the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from Al-Quneitra.

To speed up the conclusion of the Syrian-Israeli Agreement Kissinger made efforts to provide the "friendly" Arab countries' support. In the relations with Israel Kissinger followed the "whip-and-cake" policy. At times, in response to Israel's declinatory bearing, Kissinger turned to direct threats noting that such bearing would jeopardize the US aid to Israel. Another instance of threat was the American representative's condemnation of the Israeli attack on North Lebanon at the UN. An act which, being a kind of pressure, diminished the possibility that Tel-Aviv would meet them halfway. During a meeting with Israeli top leaders on March 2 Kissinger failed to change their standpoint.

Later on the same day Kissinger met Assad and told him Israel's Prime Minister Meyir's position had grown weaker and it negatively affected the country's foreign policy. Kissinger also touched upon the problem of rendering assistance to Syria. In his turn Assad again stated Syria's standpoint concerning the separation line but he consented to the military force limitations to the East and West of the UN buffer zone³¹⁸.

On May 6 Israel had to compromise agreeing to return part of El-Kunaitra leaving its western part under control. The Syrians did not agree to these terms. On the whole Kissinger met Assad six times within the month of May and eventually managed to persuade him to consent to all the terms concerning El-Kunaitra, the nearest heights, the quantity of forces to be deployed on the UN separation zone, banning certain types of ammunition.

³¹⁸ Sheehan, Edward. *The Arabs, Israelis and Kissinger*, pp. 36-41

On May 29 Nixon sent a letter in which he assured Assad, "Israel shall maintain the terms of the truce and shall not deploy such weapons in the eastern part of Al-Quneitra that may pose threat to Al-Quneitra"³¹⁹.

It is curious that Moscow's standpoint to the negotiations was neutral. But it must be mentioned that on various occasions Gromyko advised Assad "not to agree to half-solutions".

At last on May 31, 1974, at Geneva Palace of Nations, Israeli and Syrian generals, Shafir and Tayary signed the Agreement on the separation of the troops. It consisted of a Political Document, Map, Record of Proceedings with regard to the status of the UN forces and a few secret letters of the two sides and USA containing details of the forces³²⁰. The Agreement envisaged the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from some of the areas occupied in 1967, El-Kunaitra included. A buffer zone was established between the two sides, and UN peacemaking forces were deployed there³²¹. The Agreement also made provisions for the deployment of not more than 6 brigades, 75 tanks and 36 small-caliber artillery units at a distance of 10 km to the West and East of the buffer zone. By the way, the Syrians of the buffer zone were granted the right of civil authorities. At a distance of 20 km from the buffer zone it was allowed to deploy all in all 450 tanks and middle-calibre artillery. The sides were allowed to deploy anti-aircraft missile systems only at a distance of 25 km from the separation line.

The conclusion of the Agreement was followed by exchange of wounded POWs as well as Assad's promise to curb the Palestinians' activity.

It is beyond doubt that the Agreement can be regarded as serious progress in the Syrian-Israeli relations. But the question whether it was a step towards universal peaceful settlement or a means of winning time before the renewal of military actions remains unanswered.

In those days American mass media seemed to compete against one another in praising Kissinger. The most influential and popular papers and magazines referred to him as "the most talented and merited diplomat"³²² in the history of the USA. Debates about H. Kissinger's role in and influence on

³¹⁹ W. Quandt, *ibid*, p. 244

³²⁰ Arab Report and Record, May 16-31, p. 214. For the text of the Agreement see in Appendix 8

³²¹ "Внешняя политика Советского Союза", Москва, 1975, с. 237, "Foreign Policy of Soviet Union", Moscow, 1975, p. 237.

³²² Sheehan, Edward. *The Arabs, Israel and Kissinger*, p. 129

American political reality have been going on so far. We admit the State Secretary's ability of conducting negotiations, efficiently balancing diplomacy and force, making proper use of inter-Arab controversies. All these combined with his personal qualities make him an outstanding politician. However, we think it to the point to dwell upon three faults in his Middle Eastern policy.

1. Considering all the events going on in the Middle East from the viewpoint of global confrontation with the Soviet Union Kissinger failed to set up effective cooperation with Moscow in the issues critical for the peace and stability in the region. Kissinger either underestimated or overestimated Moscow's role in the regional process.
2. Kissinger strove not to achieve universal settlement but to provide stable status quo in the region. The following events in the Middle East proved that arming Israel was not yet enough to maintain balance in the region³²³. This policy not only failed to maintain the regional status quo but it also hindered, to some extent, the USA to pursue its vital interests (war in 1973, oil embargo, Lebanese war of 1982 etc.). Kissinger, continuing his special relations with Israeli authorities, did not succeed in gaining the confidence of the majority in the Arab world.
3. Kissinger underestimated or neglected Syria's factor, as well as that of the Palestinians in the peacemaking process. As we will see later, during the Lebanese crisis, Kissinger's standpoint was going to hamper the realisation of the US Middle Eastern policy.

To strengthen his position inside the country and to some extent to share "Kissinger's glory" US President R. Nixon went on an official visit to Egypt, Syria, Israel and Jordan. It was the US President's first visit to the Arab countries of the region. Nixon's visit to Syria greatly contributed to the Syrian-US relations and laid the foundations of their further development. Nixon was warmly received in Syria. Like Kissinger Nixon, too, was impressed by Assad's individuality, he even saw certain "traits of a genius"

³²³ On January 11, 1977, at a dinner-party organised by American Jewish organisations in honour of H. Kissinger, Israel's Ambassador in the USA Simcha Dinitz stated, "Only in the past three years Israel got from the USA so much economic and military aid that it is more than the aid received during 25 years. And Kissinger played an important role in it".

in Assad. During the meeting Nixon informed Assad that the USA "supported the restoration of the borders of 1967 in the Golans within the framework of universal peace"³²⁴. In answer to Assad's statement that Israel would never return the Golans of its own accord Nixon remarked that "the goal of mediatory diplomacy was to make the Israelites retreat from the Golan Heights step by step until their final withdrawal"³²⁵. During the meeting Nixon offered Damascus financial aid. It must be noted that the USA envisaged 100 million dollar's worth of aid to Syria in case the diplomatic relations were restored. This was mentioned in the statement concerning the assistance rendered to the Middle Eastern countries for 1975 (the statement was sent to the American Congress on April 24, 1974).

The most important achievement of Nixon's visit to Syria was the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries on June 16. Returning to Washington Nixon took up the project of economic assistance to Syria, which included the spheres of water supply, irrigation, construction of rural roads, energetics, agriculture, health. Within the framework of that project, in 1975, Syria got two "development loans" of 58 million dollars³²⁶.

According to the data of the US Congress Research Service from 1950 till 1981 (the end of the last US project) the USA granted Syria 627,5 million dollars out of which 340 million for development, 438 million for economic purposes, 155,4 million for food, 61 thousand for military training projects. This aid was realised within the period of 1974-1979³²⁷.

Having met Nixon Assad was definitely enthusiastic about US President's promises which he interpreted as "serious American intentions" to achieve overall settlement and completely withdraw the Israeli troops from the occupied Arab lands. Thus in his interview to "Al-Ahram" Assad said, "The change in the US standpoint is in favour of the American people and runs counter to the interests of Zionism"³²⁸. And a little later he declared, "None of the Arabs speaks to Israel. We speak to the United States"³²⁹.

³²⁴ "Foreign Policy" N 22, Spring 1976. Sheehan, Edward. Step by Step in the Middle East.

³²⁵ *ibid*

³²⁶ The Department of State Bulletin, Washington, 28.07.1975, p. 127

³²⁷ CRS Issue Brief, Syrian-US Relations, May 3, 1995, by Alfred B. Prados, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, p. 11

³²⁸ 05.07.1974

³²⁹ "Washington Post", 05.03.1975

Consequently bilateral contacts between the top officials of the two countries grew active in 1974-1975³³⁰.

However, Assad's hopes concerning Washington's "serious intentions" did not come true. It was for the simple reason that America's Middle Eastern policy was worked out by Kissinger who, focusing his attention on concluding Egyptian-Israeli and Jordan-Israeli agreements overlooked the Syrian front. In part it can be explained by the fact that the US Secretary of State was striving to make use of Egypt's "openness" at most, as he realized the improbability of concluding a second agreement on the Golans. According to P. Seale it was Kissinger's fault that "Nixon's intentions concerning overall settlement vanished into thin air"³³¹. Assad could hardly be aware that after the conclusion of the Syrian-Israeli Agreement in May 1974, "Americans pledged to coordinate all their peacemaking initiatives concerning Syria with Israel"³³².

Such was the essence of American "peacemaking" policy in the Middle East. Americans began to realize the importance of developing their relations with Syria, but as long as it did not run counter to "Israel's security and lawful interests"³³³. To put it in a nutshell, Americans were interested only in securing peaceful borders for Israel (including the borders with Syria). For this reason Washington did not at all doubt the necessity of maintaining Israeli presence in the Golans though admitting some "cosmetic" territorial changes³³⁴.

As a result of the Watergate scandal Nixon had to resign on August 9, 1974³³⁵. Vice-President Gerald Ford acceded to power and immediately stated that Kissinger was to remain State Secretary.

³³⁰ Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Washington and had several meetings with the US President in August 1974, and in June 1975.

³³¹ Seale P., *ibid*, p. 248

³³² "Foreign Policy", N 55, (Summer 1974), pp. 92-112

³³³ 01.09.1974

³³⁴ «Правда», /"Pravda" soviet main newspaper/, 28.09.1974

³³⁵ On June 17, 1972, five people were arrested, charged with breaking into the Watergate Complex. During the investigation their ties with the CIA and the Committee of the President's Reelection were confirmed. On June 27 President Nixon was directly involved in the Watergate Scandal when he instructed the chief of his staff, H. R. Haldeman, to suspend the FBI investigation into the incident for political reasons. The conversation was recorded by the President's secret recording system, and two years later the record was made public resulting in Nixon's resignation.

Compared with Nixon, Ford was more pro-Israeli. His standpoint concerning Syria was as follows, "Any peace agreement with Syria must secure Israel's presence in the Golans"³³⁶.

On October 26-29, 1974, a summit meeting of the leaders of Arab countries was held in Rabat. It unanimously declared the PLO as the only legitimate organization representing the Palestinians' interests. The opinion of the Arab world was that King Hussein of Jordan was not any longer to negotiate with Israel for the western bank of the River Jordan. The summit also rejected any possibility of partial settlement with Israel. The decisions of the Rabat summit concerning the PLO, as well as PLO President Yassir Arafat's presence at the UN General Assembly were historic events, since the Palestinians were officially acknowledged as a conflicting side. Thus, the conclusion of the Jordan-Israeli agreement was prevented putting another obstacle on the way of the "step-by-step" policy.

Assad realized that Israel was trying to isolate Egypt leaving Syria alone against the superior Israeli forces. That was why the Syrian leadership, cooperating with the USSR, did their best to prevent the conclusion of the second Egyptian-Israeli agreement.

In October 1974, Kissinger visited Damascus thrice. During his meetings with Assad he tried to find out Syria's standpoint concerning "the problem of establishing peace in the Near East"³³⁷.

Assad informed Kissinger that in case the second Egyptian-Israeli Agreement was concluded, Syria would have to use force in order to compel Israel to give up some occupied territories. Assad also stated that the partial presence of the UN Separation Observers' force would depend on the further withdrawal of Israel from the Golans or on renewing the work of Geneva Congress³³⁸.

In order to prevent Egypt's further isolation in the Arab world, its maneuvering and conclusion of an Egyptian-Israeli Agreement Syria was making efforts to conciliate PLO with Jordan and to unite both conflicting parties under its leadership. Indeed the Syrian-Jordan-Palestinian tripartite efforts under the aegis of the Soviet Union, the internal political situation in Israel (dissensions among the leadership, coming elections, etc.), as well as

unfavorable regional events (conclusion of the Iraqi-Iranian Agreement in March 1975, the Lebanese crisis, etc.) delayed, for some time, the conclusion of the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement, which, due to Washington's active mediatory efforts, was realized in Geneva on September 4.

After the conclusion of the second Egyptian-Israeli Agreement Syria turned out to be more vulnerable, therefore, counteracting the American policy Syria more closely cooperated with the Soviet Union trying to create a new front against Israel and to involve Jordan in it. It also made some steps towards extenuating "hostility" in the Syrian-Iraqi relations³³⁹.

It must be noted that after the conclusion of the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement Kissinger focused his "peacemaking" efforts on the Syrian front. At the meeting with the representatives of the Arab world at the UN on September 29, 1975, the Secretary of State said, "The United States is ready to work towards the second Syrian-Israeli step. In case there is willingness, the USA will take measures to reach complete settlement". Kissinger also said that it was necessary to think how to satisfy the Palestinians' lawful demands³⁴⁰. However, Kissinger's statements did not affect Syria in any way as the latter kept on rejecting any possibility of settlement³⁴¹.

Considering Sadat's bearing as "an act of going back on the Arab problem and on his comrades-in-arms" Assad was not going to follow Sadat's example as he himself stated, "Egypt's removal from the Arab-Israeli conflict violated the correlation of forces in the region leaving Syria alone on the front line of the struggle against Israel"³⁴². And it is quite natural that Syria, turning down any agreement with Israel, kept on increasing its military potential with the Soviet aid as it did not exclude the probability of fighting against Israel alone. Here it is important to note that increasing military cooperation with Moscow Assad let the Soviet leaders know that the rejection of the American proposals did not mean that Syria definitely supported the renewal of the congress on Middle Eastern settlement under the aegis of the Soviet Union and on the conditions the latter proposed. The

³³⁹ "Известия" / "Izvestia"-second biggest Soviet newspaper/, 29.05.1975. After the meeting between Hussein and Assad in August 5, 1975 the joint declaration was published, which announced the creation of the joint High Political Command run by the leaders of both countries.

³⁴⁰ Press Release. Department of State. Bureau of Public Affairs. September 29, 1975

³⁴¹ TACC, 09.11.1975.

³⁴² Damascus Domestic Service, 3 September 1975

³³⁶ Public Papers of the President of the US Gerald Ford, 1975, ii, Washington 1977, 1914 (26 November 1975).

³³⁷ Damascus Domestic Service. 14 October, 1974

³³⁸ Damascus Domestic Service. 11, 14, October and November 7, 1974

Syrian leader appealed to Moscow for assistance in his version of settling the Palestinian problem according to which the matter of prolonging the term of the UN Separation Observers' mandate for the Golans was closely connected with the necessity of including some amendments in UN Security Council's resolution 242³⁴³.

Syria's strategic doctrine and goals concerning Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict were submitted to the Ba'ath National Congress and were confirmed by the latter. The document stated that "The whole Arab potential must be used in the struggle against imperialist, colonial, Zionist presence in Palestine, a struggle that is a key issue in the national liberation movement", Ba'ath characterized the Arab-Zionist struggle as a "fatal struggle, a matter of sink or swim, a historic one", which was to annihilate Zionism root and branch and liberate "all the Arab lands, all Arab Palestinian lands included"³⁴⁴.

First of all Syrian leaders intended to liberate all the territories, occupied by Israel in 1967, including the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Jerusalem. At the Congress Assad said: "We are halfway to our goal and we must be militarily ready. Our major weapons are Arab unity and Arab solidarity. We made efforts to set good relations with the USA, to gain its friendship in order to turn the USA into a neutral force. We sought US aid in order to weaken our immediate enemy and to prevent the USA from breaking the Arabs up. I told Kissinger that we, Arabs yearn for peace more than any other people. But the road to peace is still very long"³⁴⁵.

Civil War in Lebanon

Great changes had taken place in Lebanon in the course of 20 years before the civil war broke out in 1975. Owing to the unprecedented growth of oil resources in the countries of the Persian Gulf Lebanon turned into a country that connected the Arab world with western, as well as American economies. Being a country of more liberal economy Lebanon swallowed the

capital that flowed from the monarchies of the Gulf, as well as from Syria, Egypt and Iraq, the so-called countries "in socialist shackles". In 1970 the sphere of services (finance, banking, commerce, tourism) formed 40 per cent of the gross national product (G. N. P.), which was one of the highest in the world. Banking was the central, prevailing sphere in the country's economy. The first-rate hotels and casinos built in Beirut, as well as loose manners attracted Arab sheikhs and nabobs who had an opportunity not only to invest their money in Lebanon but also to amuse themselves in "the Paris of the Orient".

But the capital flowing into Lebanon and the profit made from it were not equally distributed among the population of the country based on the communal warp. Lebanon's governing was based on the religious-communal principle, which not only impeded realization of an efficient social policy but also negatively affected all the spheres of the socio-political life, thus, weakening the foundations of the state and promoting chronic instability. Due to American interference the country managed to avoid expansion of the civil war in 1958 but it did not happen in 1975.

The National Pact, established with the British help and US consent, among Christian Maronites, Sunni and Shia Muslims during World War II remained unchanged until concluding Taif Agreement in 1989. But the influx of the Palestinians in the 1960-s (particularly after the six-day war in 1967 and Jordan crisis in 1970) who formed another ingredient of the Lebanese communal structure, violated the fragile balance set up by the Pact and promoted civil war.

The Palestinians forming 15 per cent of Lebanon's population, began to influence the country's political life. The steady increase of the Palestinians, their militarization and reinforcement gave rise to Christian Maronites' dissatisfaction and reaction in practice.

Actually the expansion of Palestine Resistance Movement on the basis of social-class controversies in Lebanon started to jeopardize Maronite Christians' privileged status in the power pyramid of the country. One of the main reasons for the civil war in Lebanon was "the dictatorship of the Maronite Christian elite when not only Muslim but also Christian (Orthodox,

³⁴³ "Al-Ray", 18.10.1975

³⁴⁴ Maoz Moshe. Syria and Israel from War to Peacemaking, p. 145

³⁴⁵ Drysdale, Alasdair and Hinnebusch R. Syria and the Middle East Peace Process. Council on Foreign Relations, p. 112

Catholic, Apostolic, Protestant) communities were considered inferior in the governing system of the country”³⁴⁶.

In the camp of the Maronites two major wings had been formed – Bashir Gemayel’s “Kataib” (Phalanga)³⁴⁷ and Danny’s (the son of Lebanon’s ex-President Camille Chamoun) “An-Numur” (Tigers). These two wings were united in the so-called Lebanese Front. This was the right-wing camp in the civil war.

But things were not going well within this front as both wings struggled to impose control over the Lebanese Christian community. There were frequent clashes between their detachments. In 1978-1979 the right-wing forces made several attacks on the largest (after the Maronites) community – that of the Christian Armenians who had reasonably adopted the policy of positive neutrality.

The fact that other Christian communities – Catholic, Orthodox, Apostolic – as well as the “National Bloc” party consisting of Maronites and the Maronite “Zghorta” group (which later separated from the Lebanese Front and cooperated with Sunni forces) did not join the right-wing forces, basically refutes the viewpoint that the Lebanese conflict was of religious nature³⁴⁸.

The social changes of 1950-1960-s activated Lebanon’s Druzes, who headed by Kamal Jumblatt started to protest against the unjust political division of the country and demand a bigger share.

³⁴⁶ Հովհաննիսյան Ն. Արաբական երկրների պատմություն, հ. 3, Երևան, 2006, էջ 638-649: Տես նաև Հովհաննիսյան Ն. Լիբանանյան կոնֆլիկտը և Լիբանանի հայ համայնքի դիրքորոշումը /1975-1982/, Երևան 1982. N.Hovhannisyan. History of the Arab countries. Vol.3, Yerevan, 2006, pp.638-649.

³⁴⁷ “Kataib” was the Maronites’ major political party founded by Pierre Gemayel on November 21, 1936. Based on the Phoenician legacy in Lebanon the party adopted the motto “God, Family, State”. Bashir was Pierre Gemayel’s younger son. In 1976 he became Commander of “Lebanese Forces” (right-wing Christian coalition), which included the party’s 15000 – thousand militia, President Suleiman Frangieh’s group in the North, Chamoun’s group of 3500 people, as well as Father Kassis’ Maronite Church forces. Bashir Gemayel supported cooperation with Israel and fought against the presence of PLO and Palestinians in the country, as well as against his political opponents (even among the Maronites). So in June, 1978 Bashir Gemayel organized the assassination of pro-Syrian Frangieh’s family (his wife, son and little daughter). On July 7, 1980, his forces broke into the “Tigers” headquarters, killed 80 people thus eliminating Kamil Shamoun’s National Liberal Party. On August 1982, Bashir was elected President of Lebanon.

³⁴⁸ Հովհաննիսյան Ն. Արաբական երկրների պատմություն, հ. 3, Երևան 2006, էջ 641. N.Hovhannisyan. History of the Arab countries. Vol.3, Yerevan, 2006, p.641.

The other side of the civil war, the left-wing forces united in the “National Movement” (headed by Kamal Jumblatt), which also included the Progressive-Socialist, Communist, Ba’ath, National-Socialist parties, as well as organizations of “Communist activities”, “Nasserists”, “Murabitoun”, etc. Yet the relations within the National Movement were not smooth, particularly those between Amal and PLO, i.e. between the national-patriotic forces of Lebanon and Syria, especially when it became clear that Damascus had no intentions of leaving Lebanon.

Indeed, the Palestinians’ anti-Israeli activity did a lot of harm to Lebanon, whose stability and security were put at stake. Thus, in 1972, during the Olympic Games 11 Israeli sportsmen were killed by Palestinians. In response to it, on April 10, 1973, a special Israeli detachment broke into Beirut at midnight and killed three leading members of PLO in their flats (Kamal Nasser, Yusif Najjar and Kamal Edvan). The Lebanese army located in the district did not interfere. This last circumstance substantiated the Palestinians’ suspicions that the Christian leadership of Lebanon had secretly consented to the realization of that act by Israel³⁴⁹.

The situation in Lebanon was gradually heating. On April 13, 1975, the church in the District of Ain al-Rumanna in Beirut was fired at because of which 4 Christians were killed. Armed members of the right-Christian organization “Kataib” attacked the Palestinian refugees’ camp Tel Zaatar killing 27 Palestinians. A civil war broke out in the country.

About a dozen books have been written on the civil war in Lebanon. We do not want to touch upon the details of the war but below we will dwell upon the issue connected with Syria’s role in it.

It is beyond doubt that the crisis in Lebanon would, first of all, destabilize the neighbouring countries, in particular, Syria. During the crisis in Lebanon Syria’s actions were directed towards maintaining certain relations with Lebanon, relations ensuring Lebanon’s unity and independence so important for Syria’s national security. Official Damascus held the opinion that the events in Lebanon endangering the fragile social, political and religious balance were the result of an “imperialist plot” that aimed at

³⁴⁹ Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. The Fifty Years War. Israel and the Arabs. Based on BBC TV series, pp. 156-157

distracting Syria's attention from the struggle against Israel and "breaking up Lebanon"³⁵⁰.

For Syria Lebanon has never been merely a neighbouring country, it has always been looked upon as an inseparable part of "Great Syria". Perhaps this is the reason why there have never existed diplomatic relations between the two countries. As Assad stated, "In the course of history Syria and Lebanon have been one country and one people linked with common interests. This must be realized by everybody. Their goal has practically been common interests and united security. It is very difficult to draw a demarcation line between the security issues of Syria and Lebanon"³⁵¹.

Therefore, to maintain Lebanon's unity and independence Syria adopted the policy of "la ghalib va la maghloub" (neither winner nor loser). This means, it was not in Syria's interests if the Palestinians won, nor was the existence of Lebanon ruled by Christian Maronites. If everything is clear in the latter case (the perspective of an anti-Syrian Christian state patronized by Israel), then the outcome of the former version would be rather complicated since the Palestinians' victory would jeopardize the peaceful co-existence of Lebanon's multi-faceted communities and the established balance of the religious-communal system, which in its turn, would arise a negative reaction in Israel causing a new Syrian-Israeli conflict undesirable for Syria at the moment. And, last but not least, Palestinian nationalist, revolutionary Lebanon, more left-oriented for political and ideological scruples than Ba'athist Syria, was inadmissible for Damascus for which "rival Baathist Iraq was more than enough"³⁵². We should not forget that Syria regarded Palestinians merely as an important, practical means to realize its own plans in the region. Naturally, Damascus wanted the Palestinians to be governable. Therefore Arafat's independent standpoint could not appeal to the Syrians. For Assad Arafat was like "artillery without an army", that could only declare war but was unable to win it. The dissensions between H. Assad and Y. Arafat were gradually growing into manifest hostility.

It is undeniable that H. Assad interfered in the events in Lebanon to help neither the Palestinians nor the Christians but to save Lebanon as a political unit. Lebanon was not only an inseparable part of "Great Syria" for

H. Assad, but also a country whose stability and security were of vital significance for Syria. It was official Damascus' interest in maintaining Lebanon's fragile political balance that was acknowledged by most Arab countries and the USA. Under the circumstances of international consensus Syria became de facto the only operating force securing stability in Lebanon and later de-jure the only foreign country with unlimited control power.

Taking into consideration the relatively stable situation in Lebanon till the autumn of 1975 Syria preferred abstaining from direct interference in the events in Lebanon. In September 1975, after the conclusion of the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement and increasing clashes in Lebanon, Damascus decided to send two Palestinian detachments, that were controlled by the PLA (Palestinian Liberation Army) and "Al-Saiqa", to Lebanon. They were deployed in the surroundings of the northern Town of Tripoli and tried to put an end to the military actions there³⁵³. And although those detachments were soon removed from the country on the demand of the Lebanese government, their interference set a precedent for the invasion of the Yarmouk detachments of the PLA into Lebanon on January 19, 1976, i.e. three months later. And this was a moment when the Christian forces had brought the country to the brink of splitting up because of their large-scale military actions. This time Syria's interference ended in a truce in January 1976 and Lebanon's President Suleiman Frangieh's declaration, on February 14, of a project of settlement based on "national consensus".

The majority of Arabs thought that the Lebanese crisis was mostly in the interests of Israel. Some politicians were sure that Egypt and the USA profited from the Lebanese war, as it distracted the Arab world's attention from the second Egyptian-Israeli Agreement Sinai 2 and reduced the international pressure on Israel and the USA.

According to another opinion the Lebanese crisis was part of the extensive project worked out by Washington and aiming at eliminating PLO and establishing peace in Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Israel under the aegis of the USA³⁵⁴.

We agree that "the Lebanese crisis gave Israel an opportunity to win time and have a rest". As for the USA, at the beginning of the crisis,

³⁵⁰ Assad's speech on the Lebanese crisis on July 20, 1975

³⁵¹ (Lebanese magazine), 1975, June 26

³⁵² "Le Monde" 14 April, 1976

³⁵³ SANA, 25 September 1975. 12.12.1975

³⁵⁴ Quandt W. Decade of Decisions: American Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1967-1976, p. 281

Washington tried to check Israel and Syria so that they could not wage war while it was busy deporting the Americans from Lebanon³⁵⁵. According to the Israeli daily "Maariv" the American political circles shared the opinion that American interference in Lebanon, the way it was carried out in 1958, was "impossible and undesirable"³⁵⁶. The United States considered what was going on in Lebanon to be the country's "home affair" and turned down any chance of interference.

It must be noted that on the eve of the Lebanese crisis and at its initial stage it was often said that there was coldness in the US-Israeli relations and that Israel could no longer be considered the USA's only ally in the region as Egypt might also claim that role. Some political scientists assigned the disagreements between Tel-Aviv and Washington to the above-mentioned fact and the Syrian invasion of Lebanon. Unlike the Americans, Israel adopted an extremely negative position declaring, "Israel will never allow any foreign invasion of Lebanon" and "Israel cannot remain impartial in the case of Syrian invasion irrespective of its goals"³⁵⁷. But gradually, under the Americans' influence and as a result of the confrontation with the Palestinians, the Israeli standpoint changed. It was a pre-election period, and Israel's ruling circles passed on to the policy "of waiting". Israel's Minister of Defense said, "As long as the Syrians fight against the Palestinians together with the Christians or vice-versa and as long as the Syrian actions are not directed against Israel, our military interference is meaningless"³⁵⁸.

Here we must pay attention to Washington's attitude towards Syrian interference. On September 16, 1975, American Ambassador to Damascus Richard Murphy, appealed to Assad to abstain from invading Lebanon, stressing that "any interference from outside will be considered as great threat by Israel". But beginning from February 1976, the American standpoint changed and Washington began to support Syrian mediatory efforts in Lebanon. The USA advised Israel, the USSR and European states not to undertake any action in Lebanon and preferred achieving settlement through moderate Arab states such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

³⁵⁵ During the deportation of the Americans from Beirut there were some direct contacts between the American Embassy and the PLO. Their cooperation let some politicians even suppose that the USA acknowledged the Palestinians.

³⁵⁶ "Maariv", 08.01.1976

³⁵⁷ "Maariv", 06.06.1976

³⁵⁸ *ibid*

After some unsuccessful American attempts at political settlement in a situation when clashes continued in Lebanon, and the left-wing forces headed by K. Jumblatt carried out some successful military operations, the USA and Israel started to admit Syria's stabilizing role in Lebanon.

Washington was worried that left-wing Lebanon would allow the Palestinians to make attacks on Israel from its territory. It was likely to result in a war involving Syria, probably Egypt as well. So the United States did not attempt to prevent the Syrian military invasion of Lebanon, moreover, they noted that limited Syrian interference might stabilize the situation and guarantee the country's security. P. Seale even refers to the tripartite "red line" agreement between the USA, Syria, Israel, according to which Israel also consented to the Syrian presence in Lebanon³⁵⁹. American mass media claimed that Washington had managed to convince Tel-Aviv to agree to Syrian military presence in the South of Lebanon up to the line Sidon-Jezin (red line)³⁶⁰ in the North in return for acknowledging Israel's security interests in South Lebanon by the Syrians.

We think such "friendly" bearing of the USA towards Syrian invasion can be explained by the fact that the year of 1976 was a decisive one for Ford due to the coming elections. That is why Ford had to prevent a new crisis with all its negative consequences in the Near East, in this case, in Lebanon. Washington also wanted Syria to agree to prolonging the peacemaking "blue berets" mandate for the Golans on May 30. Otherwise, all the diplomatic gains of Kissinger would vanish and Ford would have to run for presidency under the shadow of the Middle Eastern crisis.

The Americans also noted that "the Syrians' presence in Lebanon was in favour of Israel as the forces controlled by Damascus would not allow any incident on the North border of Israel". It was also emphasized that "the invasion of Lebanon will weaken Syria and will make it conclude a new agreement on the Golans"³⁶¹.

At the end of April newly appointed American Ambassador to Lebanon Francis E. Meloy³⁶² criticized Kissinger saying, "In order to flatter

³⁵⁹ Seale P. Assad of Syria. The Struggle for the Middle East, p. 279

³⁶⁰ "The Times", 13.09.1976: Ford Library, WHCF CD 71, Box 27, 13 April 1976

³⁶¹ "Yedioth Ahronot" 24.03.1976; "Haaretz", 11.06.1976

³⁶² On June 16, 1976, in Beirut, Meloy, the incoming U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon accompanied by Robert O. Waring, the U. S. Economic Counselor, was on the way to present his credentials to the new Lebanese President. Meloy, Waring and their driver,

the Israelites we checked the Syrians too long. That is why we had more victims". In those days the Israeli daily "Davar" analyzed the American attitude to the Lebanese crisis in this way, "From the American viewpoint the only bright point in the Lebanese problem is secret cooperation with Syria"³⁶³. The officials of the Department of State noted frankly that Kissinger had made a bad mistake trying to separate Syria and Egypt. Consequently Egypt had been isolated and had lost its power to influence Arab countries. The result of that policy was also the fact that at the beginning of the crisis the Americans did not manage to cooperate with the Syrians.

After the invasion most part of Lebanon turned out to be under Syrian control but clashes went on (particularly in Beirut). Arab countries condemned the Syrian invasion, particularly Egypt, which joining Iraq, Libya and PLO tried to counteract Syria.

There is also another viewpoint according to which Syrian invasion was carried out within the framework of Kissinger's policy. In terms of that policy, as a result of the invasion, Syria was to vanquish PLO and get the Golans in return for it, while Jordan was to get the West Bank. The Pax Americana was to be set up in the region weakening the Arab countries with extremist administrations and reduce the influence of the Soviet Union to a minimum³⁶⁴.

Yet, actually Washington did not have a completely elaborated policy towards the Lebanese crisis. Confused by the war going on there Washington regarded it as a mere continuation of the Arab-Israeli conflict. As for Syria, it "played" neither an American, nor an Israeli "game" in Lebanon for the simple reason that neither Kissinger, nor Ford had thought of a serious game – they were to prohibit unleashing an Arab-Israeli expansive war.

Zuhair Mohammed Moghrabi, were kidnapped by Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine members as they crossed the Green Line, the division between Beirut's Christian and Muslim sectors. Their bullet-riddled bodies were found a short time later in mainly Muslim west Beirut, which was then controlled by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's guerrillas.

³⁶³ Harik I. Lebanon: Anatomy of Conflict, p. 121

³⁶⁴ Quandt W. Decade of Decisions: American Policy toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1967-1976, p. 283.

On October 18, 1976, the Congress of the Arab world leaders was held in Er-Riyad. PLO President Arafat also took part in it. The Congress discussed the current situation in Lebanon and possibilities of cease-fire. Assad succeeded in making some progress towards improvement in Syrian-Egyptian relations, as well as Egypt's recognition of Syria's chief role in Lebanon. A few days later on October 25-26 the second meeting of the Arab leaders was held in Cairo where the resolutions of Rabat were ratified. The most important of those resolutions was the one "on forming Arab peacemaking forces to restore law and order in Lebanon"³⁶⁵. The resolution, in fact, provided a special status for Syria in Lebanon since the above-mentioned forces were to be composed mostly of Syrians.

Syria and the Signing of Camp David Agreement

After concluding the "Sinai 2" Agreement the Arab world seemed to unite again: Egypt and Syria renewed dialogue, while Jordan improved its relations with Syria and PLO. The uniting tendencies that emerged were, perhaps, conditioned by the temporary cease-fire in Lebanon, as well as by the preparations for a new diplomatic stage before the coming presidential elections in the USA.

On December 18-21 Assad paid Egypt an official visit during, which the two leaders decided to form a United Political Leadership and appealed to all the parties of the conflict to resume the work of Geneva Congress in March 1977³⁶⁶.

Thus, imposing control over Lebanon, improving its relations with Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Syria was gradually turning into a regional power "able to confront the pressure of superpowers"³⁶⁷.

In the course of 1976 and at the beginning of 1977 in his interviews given to American journalists Assad continually remarked that Syria wanted to resume the negotiations in Geneva and to conclude a peace agreement with Israel provided Israel withdrew its troops from all the Arab territories occupied in the war of 1967 and consented to the formation of the state of

³⁶⁵ The number of the Syrian soldiers was not to exceed 30 thousand. The peacemaking forces also included soldiers from Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan and other countries.

³⁶⁶ 22.12.1976

³⁶⁷ From P. Seale's interview with Assad, published in "The Observer" on March 6, 1977.

Palestine on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. Assad also attached importance to the US mediatory initiatives and its role in the political settlement in the Near East³⁶⁸.

US efforts directed at reducing the tension and establishing overall peace in the region grew more intensive after the election of US President Jimmy Carter. Carter followed an "open" foreign policy, thus putting an end to Kissinger's secret "one-person" diplomacy. Carter opposed Kissinger's "step-by-step" policy by adopting a new one directed at universal settlement, which "recognized the Palestinians' right and was to establish real peace between the Arabs and the Jews"³⁶⁹.

Unlike the previous president Carter found Syria to be an important performer of the Middle Eastern policy. Such a reassuring bearing of the new US President allowed some official Syrian papers to write, "Carter is trying to liberate American policy from Zionist dependence"³⁷⁰. But great was Damascus' disappointment when Carter publicly admitted the idea of establishing "protected borders" for Israel. This not only enabled Israel to refuse to return the Arab lands occupied in 1967 but also created favourable conditions for maneuvering as the protection of Israeli borders was a prerequisite. As Assad put it, "US Democratic and Republican Parties strive to solve the problem at the expense of Arab rights and lands"³⁷¹.

In February 1977, new State Secretary of the USA, Cyrus Vance paid his first visit to the region. After meeting Vance in Damascus Assad confessed, "State Secretary Vance, as a serious and logical representative of the American administration, made a positive impression on me. Yet he did not produce any definite proposal, which could serve as a basis for my further decisions. Vance's visit aimed only at gathering facts"³⁷². The US State Secretary discussed some problems with the Syrian leadership concerning Assad and Carter's meeting. According to Israeli sources Assad turned down

³⁶⁸ "Washington Post", 02.12.1976; "Time", 17.01.1977

³⁶⁹ Հարապետյան Ռ. Սիրիա-ամերիկյան հարաբերություններ, էջ 78: Carter was the first US President, who admitted in his speech in March 1977, the necessity of creating a "Palestinian home-country". R.Karapetian. US-Syrian relations, p.78.

³⁷⁰ 09.05.1977

³⁷¹ Damascus Domestic Service, 15, 20, 23 January 1977; 15.03.1977

³⁷² 01.03.1977

the proposal of meeting Carter in Washington and suggested realizing it "somewhere in Europe"³⁷³.

In March 1977, having met Israel's Prime Minister Rabin in Washington, Carter declared three major principles of universal settlement in the Middle East:

1. Necessity of establishing peace and regular relations (commerce, exchange of diplomats, etc.).
2. Guarantee of security for all the sides and restoration of the borders existing before the war of 1967.
3. Necessity of solving the Palestinian problem, which "is of political, as well as of humanitarian significance"³⁷⁴.

Carter was interested in quick settlement since he wanted to come up to Assad's and Sadat's expectations, at the same time depriving Israel of any chance to evade the negotiations.

The US Department of State proposed the following version of settlement concerning the Golans. Warning stations, as well as limited Israeli forces were going to be deployed on the Heights in order to prevent Syrian possible attacks. It was also proposed to limit the number of the planes using the modern airports in Jordan and Syria. International observers were going to control those airports³⁷⁵.

On May 1977, Assad met Carter in Geneva. During the meeting the US President once more stated his positive attitude to the creation of "Palestinian home" adding, "the USA will continue persuading Israel to return to the borders existing before 1967"³⁷⁶. In his turn Assad said that if the Israeli troops were removed from the occupied Arab areas including East Jerusalem and a Palestinian unit was established (even with Jordan on the principle of confederacy), "Damascus will agree to put an end to the war with Israel and take certain security measures". Assad also added that the end of war would result in establishing peace and solving psychological problems³⁷⁷.

³⁷³ "Haaretz", 03.03.1977

³⁷⁴ "Major Problems in American Foreign Relations". W. B. Quandt. Carters Creative, Pragmatic Summit Diplomacy, Ch. 13, p. 695

³⁷⁵ "Haaretz", 13.05.1977

³⁷⁶ See 17.02.1977 and 11.03.1977, Jurban Kuriya's articles.

³⁷⁷ Carter, Jimmy. The Blood of Abraham. Boston, 1985, p. 72

On the whole Assad was satisfied with the results of the meeting³⁷⁸. Syrian mass media characterized the meeting as a "turning point" in the settlement of the Middle Eastern problem³⁷⁹. Carter was also impressed by the meeting and years later he wrote in his book criticized by the Jews, "during the talks I met a leader who was honest while speaking about the Arab standpoint to the peacemaking process"³⁸⁰.

What Assad proposed with regards to the political settlement with Israel was the repetition of his two-phase strategy of 1974 according to which at the first stage they were to sign the so-called "peace agreement" in return for all the occupied Arab territories, East Jerusalem included, and setting up a Palestinian state. At the second stage this proposal envisaged establishing diplomatic and economic relations with Israel (i.e. complete peace).

Assad told Carter that the peace talks had to correspond to UN resolutions 242 and 338 and they were to include the Soviet Union. The Syrian leader rejected any bilateral negotiations between Israel and any Arab country and he "was also against leaving the USSR out of the process"³⁸¹.

Assad was sure that Syria, unlike Israel and the USA, had proved its willingness to achieve peace by the following:

- Respecting the UN resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict
- Supporting the decision of the majority of the international community that the Palestinians, like other peoples of the world, have the right to self-determination
- Respecting the international laws that prohibit occupation and annexation of lands belonging to other peoples
- Setting up its own borders and respecting the internationally recognized borders of others
- Offering to remove the Syrian forces from Lebanon upon the Lebanese government's request³⁸².

In November 1976, in his interview to the "Washington Post" Assad noted, "The UN resolutions must be carried out with absolute accuracy, i.e.

³⁷⁸ H. Assad's press conference on S. Vance's visit to Damascus on August 7, 1977, was published in 08.08.1977

³⁷⁹ Damascus Domestic Service, 09.05.1977

³⁸⁰ Carter, Jimmy. Palestine Peace not Apartheid, pp. 71-81

³⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 73

³⁸² Carter, Jimmy. Palestine Peace not Apartheid, p. 78

withdrawal of the Israeli troops from all the occupied Arab areas, creation of the Palestinian state and elimination of the war situation. The other problems put forward by Israel are secondary and have nothing to do with making peace. They (the Israelites) are constantly speaking about the necessity of diplomatic relations, economic, commercial and cultural exchanges. But these relations may also be absent between two countries, which are not at war with each other"³⁸³.

Carter shared Israel's opinion that establishment of peace supposed regular relations, exchange of ambassadors, commerce, open borders, tourism and regional cooperation. Nevertheless, the US President supported the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the occupied territories and creation of Palestinian "home-country" in Gaza and on the East Bank.

In May 1977, the leader of the right-wing party "Likoud" Menachem Begin was elected Israel's Prime Minister. As US State Secretary Vance said, "During Begin's power it became clear that Likoud intended to claim" the occupied Arab territories³⁸⁴. Immediately after the election Begin activated the policy of Jews' re-settlement in the Golans. The process of founding new settlements there was speeded up and even exceeded the pace of resettlement in other occupied Arab areas. Israel's Minister of Agriculture Ariel Sharon announced, "25 per cent of Israel's water flows from the Golans, therefore we must not give them up"³⁸⁵. A. Sharon also put forward a 4-year plan of building new Jewish settlements in the Golans (1977-1981).

Israel's new government did not at all mean to withdraw the troops from the Golans but supported "some trifling corrections along the cease-fire line but no more than a few hundred meters"³⁸⁶.

Washington did not approve of Begin's election, which obstructed the Arab-Israeli settlement, moreover, complicated realization of the American policy. Even certain serious disagreements between the USA and Israel were spoken about. American journalist Wolf (Zeev) Blitzer writes that the disagreement mainly concerned "the Palestinian problem". In Plitzer's words the USA informed Israel that US current Middle Eastern policy was based on resolutions 242 and 338 of UN Security Council. Here it must be mentioned that the Americans supported Israel's standpoint towards the

³⁸³ "Washington Post", 02.12.1976. "Tishrin", 21.03.1977. Interview of J. Craft with Assad.

³⁸⁴ Примаков Е. М. История одного сговора, с. 99

³⁸⁵ "Maariv", 19.06.1997

³⁸⁶ "Maariv", 09.09.1977

Golans but official Washington was absolutely against Israeli objections to the withdrawal of the troops from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The US administration was concerned about Begin's tough position since it was improbable and useless to hold a conference in Geneva (which was Carter's goal) without the Palestinians' participation and without talks on the withdrawal of the troops. In Assad's opinion, "The USA can be a success only if it occupies a neutral position. As soon as Israel realizes that the American leadership is neutral to the problem of settlement, it will stop the occupation of the Arab areas and trampling on the Palestinians' rights"³⁸⁷. But Soviet orientalist L. Medvedko states, "If the USA tried to make the impression of "neutrality" and "impartiality" with respect to other conflicts, then in the Middle Eastern issues Carter's administration did not even try to conceal its pro-Israeli attitude"³⁸⁸.

The positive impression made by Carter on Assad did not prevent Syria's rapprochement with the USSR in order to receive economic, technical, military assistance. At the same time, realizing how important Washington's role in peacemaking was Assad constantly appealed to the USA to make more active efforts towards it. In this connection we deem it necessary to underline Assad's brilliant ability of maintaining the balance between the superpowers, his skill of taking advantage of the current moment, acting as a true politician.

Assad was sure that only the Arab countries' united and coordinated way of action with respect to the USA could create serious prerequisites for universal settlement. Official Damascus believed if conclusion of one more separate Egyptian-Israeli Agreement Sinai-3 was prevented, Israel would have to meet them halfway. In August 1977, Assad stated that Syrian-Egyptian relations, which used "to have some wrinkles in the past are now fraternal again", and that he and Sadat were working together in order "to unite and strengthen their struggle aimed at regaining the Arab areas"³⁸⁹. Assad excluded the possibility of Sadat's concluding another separate

³⁸⁷ "Newsweek", 01.08.1997. Interviews with the King Hussein of Jordan and Syrian President Assad, carried out by Arnaud Bourgrave.

³⁸⁸ Медведко Л. М. К востоку и западу от Суэца, с. 339, L. Medvedko. To the East and West of Suez. p.339.

³⁸⁹ "Newsweek", 01.08.1977. Interviews with the King Hussein of Jordan and Syrian President Assad.

agreement stressing that "the negotiations of the Arab countries with the USA and other countries aim only at universal settlement"³⁹⁰.

Though Sadat was in favour of the complete withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Arab territories, actually there was fierce rivalry between him and Assad, and he objected to the participation of the joint Arab delegation in Geneva Conference, preferring to sign a separate agreement with Israel. On August 2, Sadat met US Secretary of State Vance in Cairo and, without consulting with Syria, suggested organizing a meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Arab countries and Israel in Washington in order to discuss some problems connected with the agenda of the coming conference in a "working team". Though Damascus considered Sadat's "self-willed" step worrying no serious conclusions were drawn from it.

Meeting Vance during his visit to the region Assad turned down Sadat's proposal adding, "My brother Sadat obviously means to give a fresh impetus to the peacemaking process by forming that working team". Assad told Vance that at first sight "Syria did not think that such a working team would be of any use, and that no meeting, direct or indirect, would be held between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Arab countries and Israel"³⁹¹.

Meanwhile, secretly from Assad, Sadat's assistant Hasan Touhamy and Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dayan met in Morocco in September to discuss the possibilities of signing a separate agreement not foreseen by Geneva Conference.

Americans were not worried by this meeting as there had been numerous similar meetings between the leaders of Arab countries and Israel. Later it turned out that Egypt was going to make a new deal with Israel thus running counter to the united Arab interests. A separate Egyptian-Israeli Agreement would not appeal to Washington as the latter was interested in holding Geneva Conference. The Americans did not pay proper attention to the rivalry between Assad and Sadat believing the latter's assurances that he could not "digest" a new agreement with Israel. Israeli leaders undertook direct negotiations with Egypt and later, using the traditional American lobby's pressure, made the American administration support their policy.

US Department of State faced 4 major problems before Geneva Conference in September 1977.

³⁹⁰ *ibid*

³⁹¹ Damascus Domestic Service, 4, 12 August, 1977

1. Washington was trying to get the written drafts of the peace treaty from all the sides. Israel produced a rather lengthy legal document, which left the problems concerning borders and the status of settlements unanswered. Syria and Jordan submitted the major principles of the future agreement.
2. The Department of State was concerned about the representation of the Palestinian delegation in Geneva Conference. Eventually in mid-October it became clear that PLO had consented to the idea of a united Arab delegation, which was to include a Palestinian (but not a PLO representative).
3. Washington made efforts to solve some protocol problems. Sadat was sure that the conference was to be organized properly beforehand, otherwise "everything would be confused and there would be no result". He supported Kissinger's version according to which certain secret talks were to be held before the conference. Sadat was worried that his maneuvering possibilities would be limited by other Arab countries if the conference was held in Geneva without preliminary secret talks, and in that case the USA would come to be under the pressure of the American public opinion and the pro-Israeli Congress. Israel was also dubious about the coming negotiations in Geneva. Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Dayan warned that a united Arab delegation's participation would negatively affect the work of the conference. It was considered to be a means of preventing a separate Egyptian-Israeli agreement.
4. The draft joint resolution submitted by the Soviet Union caused the USA a lot of headaches. It was a "balanced" document as it did not mention either the problem of the Palestinian state or that of the Palestinians' participation, but it focused on the necessity of ensuring the security of the countries in the region and the problem of maintaining regular relations among them. The draft was mainly based on the provisions of UN Resolution 242. In fact, the only novelty of the draft, which had not been used by the USA and which could be considered to be progress was the definition "Palestinian rights" instead of "Palestinian interests" mentioned in the previous American draft.

Having a negative attitude to the document Israel did not respond to the joint Soviet-American declaration until October 1³⁹². Only after the declaration of Vance and Gromyko the Jewish lobby in the USA and Israel raised a clamour so skillfully that four days later, when Moshe Dayan went to Washington, Carter had to agree to the American-Israeli working plan, which nullifying the Soviet-American Declaration and running counter to Syria and the USSR's intention, completely satisfied Israel's, as well as Egypt's demand to hold bilateral negotiations with each of the Arab countries separately³⁹³.

The adoption of this aforementioned document, in fact, not only rejected any possibility of cooperation with the USSR but also called holding a conference in Geneva into question. Assad, feeling "betrayed" and deceived by Carter, realized the inevitability of a separate Egyptian-Israeli deal. In E. Primakov's opinion, after Dayan had visited Washington, American policy changed abruptly forgetting even the idea of holding Geneva Conference³⁹⁴.

It is often said that Sadat did not want a conference to be held in Geneva as due to the active participation of the Soviet Union and Syria he (Sadat) would be bound hands and feet and unable to make a deal with Begin. Some authors think it to be the reason for Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in November 1977. They also suppose that Sadat wanted to keep the USSR and Syria away from the diplomatic process of settling the Middle Eastern conflict. Striving "not to be caught by the Soviet-Syrian trap" Sadat got in touch with Israel and was assured by the latter that he would get Sinai provided he signed a separate peace treaty. Previously, in October Sadat had made attempts to find out what to expect from the Americans.

Some analysts say that after the Soviet-American Declaration, tired of Carter's inability to counteract Israeli pressure, and realizing it was a waste of time, Sadat was eventually determined to agree with Israel at any cost initiating his visit to Jerusalem.

E. Primakov refutes the American version that Washington did not have a hand in the preparation of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, noting Carter's and his administration's efforts to encourage Sadat's initiative³⁹⁵. The

³⁹² Major Problems in American Foreign Relations. Ch. 13. Washington and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process. p. 697

³⁹³ Maoz Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, p. 152

³⁹⁴ Примаков Е. М. История одного сговора, с. 139

³⁹⁵ ibid p. 165

Americans succeeded in convincing Sadat that his visit to Jerusalem would grant the USA an exceptional opportunity to confront Zionist pressure and compel Israeli leaders to make peace for the simple reason that "Sadat himself offered Israel to make peace and the latter turned that offer down"³⁹⁶.

Official Damascus believed that "the American support to Sadat did not promote peace, and that the USA adapted its steps to Sadat's initiatives". Before the visit Assad warned Sadat "of the undesirable and grave consequences of his visit to Jerusalem concerning the Arab problem"³⁹⁷. In Assad's opinion Sadat's visit to Israel "meant recognition of Israel. His visit to Jerusalem meant recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's indivisible capital. With this visit Sadat broke Arab unity and eliminated all the efforts to establish peace in the region. He weakened the Arab front and acted against the desires and yearnings of the Arab masses"³⁹⁸.

US Ambassador to Cairo, Hermann Eilts recalls that he himself handed Begin's invitation to Sadat on the day when the latter was going to leave for Syria to provide if not Assad's support, then at least his neutrality to his coming visit. The two presidents' meeting in Syria lasted for seven hours during which Sadat proved to be unable to convince Assad. The latter attempted to prove the aimlessness of Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. Both sides were unyielding. After the meeting Assad told the government about their talk, and they regarded Assad as a traitor and "demanded to arrest him" in order to impede his visit. Yet Assad did not agree saying, "Arab traditions do not allow any violence against the guest"³⁹⁹.

Sadat's visit was condemned by most Arab countries, particularly by Syria, Libya, Algeria, South Yemen, PLO. The visit was immediately followed by a meeting of Palestinian and Syrian leaders and their joint declaration, which stated, "Sadat-Begin dialogue", patronized by the USA, "aims at concluding a separate (the third) Egyptian-Israeli Agreement and a question mark hangs over Geneva Congress"⁴⁰⁰.

³⁹⁶ 05.12.1977

³⁹⁷ 18.11.1977

³⁹⁸ "Newsweek", 16.01.1997

³⁹⁹ From the interview with Syria's Defence Minister M. Tlas. Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. *The Fifty Years War*. pp.129-130.

⁴⁰⁰ 05.12.1977

Algeria and Libya agreed to render Syria long-term financial assistance "to maintain the Arab front against Israel"⁴⁰¹. The Arab countries of the Gulf had a more cautious standpoint. On November 22 during a visit to Damascus Jordan's Prime Minister Mudar Badran stated that Amman considered Sadat's visit to be a "wise" step and in order not to judge emotionally preferred to wait for the results of the visit⁴⁰². Damascus demanded that Amman inform them of their final official standpoint to the problem within 72 hours. According to Syrian sources Amman's bearing was conditioned by American pressure and was within the framework of the US strategy (adopted after Sadat's visit) and aimed at "reducing the harm of Sadat's initiative to a minimum"⁴⁰³. That is the reason why Washington did not want any revelations to be made about America's role in Sadat's visit to Jerusalem. Nor did Washington want a "declinatory front" to be created round Syria.

The decrease of the American rating in the region, as well as Carter's intention to reduce pro-Syria sentiments in the Arab world resulted in Carter's personal letters to Saudi Arabia's, Jordan's, Syria's and Egypt's leaders. In his letter to Assad Carter wrote, "The United States attach special importance to Syria's role, to the continuing cooperation with Damascus and the latter's efforts in the peacemaking process in the region.

The USA hopes that it is impossible to establish just and lasting peace in the Middle East as long as the Palestinian problem is not practically solved and the rights of the Palestinian people are not provided.

The USA is confident that President Sadat's step should be regarded not as a personal step but as part of the peacemaking process and an attempt at resuming the work of Geneva Conference"⁴⁰³.

After this letter some opinions were expressed stating that Carter's administration intended to exert pressure upon Begin so that the latter would compromise not only on the Egyptian but also on the Arab front, particularly on the Palestinian one. And Carter was going to achieve this with Moshe Dayan's help⁴⁰⁴. But even if we suppose that the US President had had such intentions, how can we explain the existence of Z. Brzezinski's project in

⁴⁰¹ 25.11.1977

⁴⁰² *ibid*

⁴⁰³ Vance C. *Hard Choices*. Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy, N. Y., 1983, p. 203

⁴⁰⁴ "Al-Nahar", 26.11.1977

⁴⁰⁴ *ibid*

which the relations with Egypt and Israel were considered to be central. As for the Palestinians, Brzezinski planned to agree with them on the issues concerning only the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and what is more important, without the participation of PLO. Brzezinski's project considered Syria to have the least role in the process⁴⁰⁵.

In Syria, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem was expected to be followed by conclusion of a separate Egyptian-Israeli Agreement. Syria's Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdel Halim Khaddam said, "None of the Syrian leaders doubts that conclusion of an Egyptian-Israeli Agreement is encouraged and patronized by Washington"⁴⁰⁶.

The following changes made in Carter's Middle Eastern policy should be mentioned. If at the initial stage of presidency Carter quite warmly supported the idea of creating a "Palestinian home-country", then already in 1979 he announced, "I am against forming a Palestinian state. I do not think it will do the Palestinians any good. I do not think it will do Israel any good. I do not think it will do the neighbouring Arab countries any good"⁴⁰⁷. The same change is seen in the case of Syria. If at first Carter attached importance to Damascus' role in the process of settling the Middle Eastern problem, later Carter agreed with Israel that Syria, and other Arab countries would have to agree with Israel a little later, as long as the war was improbable under the circumstances of Egypt's absence. Making peace with Egypt, according to the USA, was to strengthen the US position in the Middle East and make the latter a more secure place.

To counteract the unification of the USA, Egypt and Israel, Syria headed the formation of the Arab Stability and Counteraction Front in Tripoli. Besides Syria, it included Algeria, Libya, South Yemen, Iraq and PLO. Gathering in Algeria for the second time the leaders of the above-mentioned countries decided to render Syria all kinds of assistance taking into account the fact that the latter "bears the historic national responsibility for confronting Israel alone".

The situation was growing aggravated in Lebanon, too. Though the Palestinian detachments in the South of the country were checked by the Lebanese army, they attacked the northern part of Israel every now and then.

In March 1978, one of these attacks resulted in killing a great number of Israelites. In reply to it the Israeli army invaded South Lebanon on March 15. The invasion was carried out while active talks were under way before Camp David and jeopardized the realization of Carter administration's strategy. On the proposal put forward by the USA the problem was immediately submitted to UN Security Council, which decided to send peacemaking forces to Lebanon in order to help the Lebanese government to impose control over the South of the country. Syrian official sources commented on the Israeli invasion, "It is one of the disguised American-Zionist steps against Syria and the Palestinian revolution. The invasion aims at creating obstacles for the Front of Arab Stability and Counteraction and particularly for Syria"⁴⁰⁸. A year later Assad stated, "The USA did not oppose the Israeli invasion of Lebanon since the American policy in the region, serving Israel's and not the American people's interests, suits the Zionist purposes. The USA directly follows the policy of "Divide to rule". On the one hand, the USA aggravates the situation and, on the other hand, it comes up as an impartial mediator trying to involve certain Arab countries in the Israeli camp"⁴⁰⁹.

Immediately after the Israeli invasion of South Lebanon Syria put its Air Force at the disposal of the Arab Restraint Forces, and Assad stated, "Syria will always be on the side of the Palestinian revolution" considering it to be "part of its national duty"⁴¹⁰.

The Syrian troops in Lebanon found themselves to be insecure and vulnerable in 1978 as the Maronite leadership of Lebanon cooperating with and assisted by Israel openly fought against Syrian presence in Lebanon. Because of this fact, as well as being dispersed, the Syrian forces were unable to turn into a real "army" and carry out the task set to them – to counteract the Israeli attack. Assad himself was sure that the situation was not in favour of "armed fight against Israel" and that it was necessary "to look for other ways of struggle that would be appropriate for the current situation"⁴¹¹. From this viewpoint official Damascus' assurances in respect of the Arabs' "weakness" and "the unreality of armed struggle at the moment" are quite admissible.

⁴⁰⁵ "Al-Fajr", 11.01.1978 /A West-Bank Palestinian newspaper published in Jerusalem/.

⁴⁰⁶ "Al-Safir", 15.01.1978

⁴⁰⁷ Polk William. The Arab World Today, p. 442

⁴⁰⁸ 17.04.1978

⁴⁰⁹ "Newsweek", 02.04.1979

⁴¹⁰ 17.03.1978

⁴¹¹ *ibid*, 18.03.1978. Assad's speech at the opening ceremony of the Euphrates reservoir.

Such was the situation when, on September 17, 1978, Egypt's President Anwar Sadat and Israel's Prime Minister Begin, actively patronized by the US President, signed two documents. The first one was "the framework of concluding a peace treaty" between the two countries, which served as a basis of concluding the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty on March 22, 1979. The second document, based in part on UN Resolution 242, was called "framework of peace in the Near East" and mainly concerned "the Palestinian problem". It envisaged three-stage settlement of the problem on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip within a five-year transitory period. Meanwhile Israel and Jordan were to conclude a peace agreement, which was to be followed by negotiations concerning the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The negotiations were to result in recognising "the Palestinians' lawful rights and just demands". The negotiations were to be held among Egypt, Israel and Jordan with the aim of gradually "providing" the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza Strip "with complete autonomy". According to the Agreement the above-mentioned three countries were to form a self-governing body (administrative council) on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, the inhabitants of which were to choose representatives to participate in the negotiations with Israel, Egypt and Jordan with respect to the final status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip⁴¹².

In fact the Agreement concluded in Camp David granted autonomy to "the inhabitants" of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip but not to the areas. It stated such a governing body (administrative council), which was not vested with any legislative or judicial power. The Agreement granted the Palestinians not autonomy but simply a chance to participate in "determining their own future". Nothing was mentioned about Jerusalem.

Conclusion of the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement was considered in the USA to be one of the achievements of the foreign policy of Carter's administration. But can we possibly call achievement an agreement, which led overall settlement of the Middle Eastern problem into deadlock, created new divisions in the region and all the more strengthened the Israeli extremist forces?

The "central part" of the project worked out by Brzezinski was carried out – the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement was concluded. It did not create appropriate conditions to implement the other parts of the project, i.e. to

⁴¹² Gresh, Alain and Vidal, Dominique. A to Z in the Middle East, pp. 239-241.

conclude agreements on the Palestinian and Syrian fronts, moreover, it intensified the feelings of insecurity and vulnerability.

The deal made in Camp David once more came to prove Washington's inability or unwillingness to shed the policy of partial solutions, which resulted in instability in the region, instead of peace.

The American positions in the Middle East suffered heavy blows in the last years of Carter's presidency. They were the revolution in Iran in 1979, the crisis connected with the hostages in the American Embassy and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

After Camp David Syria's relations with Jordan grew worse. The reason for it lay in the improvement of Syrian-PLO relations, as well as Syria's extremely intolerant attitude to Camp David deal. King Hussein, though dissatisfied with Sadat for not consulting with Amman before concluding the Agreement with Israel, secretly supported the deal hoping to settle the Palestinian problem in favour of Amman. The Syrian-Jordanian relations went from bad to worse after the summit of the Arab countries held in Amman in November 1980. On the pretext of supporting the Syrian Muslim opposition Syria concentrated a 30-thousand army on the border of Jordan.

Apart from the countries of the Arab Stability and Counteraction Front, i.e. Libya, Algeria, South Yemen, Syria's relations with the other Arab countries were either very strained or non-existent.

As for the Syrian-American relations, Camp David put an end to Syria's willingness to cooperate with the USA. The disappointment about the American policy, Syria's lasting military presence in Lebanon, as well as the danger of isolation in the Arab world compelled Assad to make the relations with Moscow closer.

Really, the complicated situation in the region, the necessity to confront the US policy, political instability inside the country compelled "weakened and isolated" Syria to seek Soviet assistance and protection⁴¹³.

⁴¹³ It was the necessity of counteracting the American policy that made Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abd al-Halim Khaddam appeal to the Arab countries to conclude agreements on defence with the USSR. In October 1978, in Baghdad, at the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries of the Arab Stability and Counteraction Front Abd al-Halim Khaddam stated, "Syria can accede to the Warsaw Pact". R.Karapetian. US-Syrian relations., p.93. Լարապետյան Ռ. Միջին-Ասիական հարաբերությունները, էջ 93.

Syria tried to oppose the USA-Egyptian alliance by concluding a Friendship Agreement with the USSR⁴¹⁴ (1980), which was to grant Syria an opportunity to establish "strategic balance" with Israel (al-tavazoun al-istratiji). The Agreement meant not only to take up arms but also to widen the circle of the allies in the region, thus obtaining new levers of influence and supports to impose pressure on Israel and compensate for the loss of Egypt⁴¹⁵.

Conclusion of Camp David Agreement made Syria face serious problems. It established new correlations of forces in the region owing to which Syria had to play one of the major roles in the Arab-Israeli conflict. After Egypt had withdrawn from the Arab struggle Syria retained the monopoly of not waging war but establishing lasting and final peace with Israel.

Camp David excluded any possibility of a large-scale Arab-Israeli war. Military success in the war against Israel was impossible without Egypt.

Certainly, the danger of a large-scale war was neutralised but the agreements concluded by Egypt and Israel did not at all promote peace and stability in the Middle East. It only strengthened Israel's security in the region, deepened inter-Arab controversies and polarisation enabling Israel to concentrate its forces on the Syrian-Lebanese and Palestinian fronts.

⁴¹⁴ Assad refused to conclude a Friendship and Cooperation Agreement with the USSR twice, in 1973 and in 1975. Yet Egypt's withdrawal from the Arab struggle, patronized by the USA, the violation of the correlation of forces in the region, as well as deepening American-Israeli relations compelled Assad to review his previous standpoint and sign the Agreement on October 8, 1980.

⁴¹⁵ Rapprochement of Iraq and Saudi Arabia, as well as starting mutually beneficent cooperation with Iran (after the revolution) testify to it.

Chapter 4 – Syria's Regional Policy after Camp David

After the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement had been concluded Syria faced three central issues in its regional policy – counteracting Israel that had grown more self-confident having strengthened its position after Camp David, struggle against legalization of the Agreement in the Arab World, securing versatile assistance from the Arab world.

As we have already mentioned Syria attached great importance to Arab unity and joint efforts in the struggle against Israel. To counteract the new correlation of forces after Camp David Syria embarked on the strategy of rapprochement with Iraq and creating an alliance between the two countries. As far as in December 1977, after Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, Assad made some steps toward forming a new inter – Arab Alliance with Iraq (despite the strained relations between the two countries) and other Arab countries. In October, 1978, Assad and Bakr, Iraq's President, signed a charter of "Joint National Action" according to which there would be a "complete military" as well as economic, political and cultural union. Signing of the charter was bilaterally considered to be an important pan-Arab historic step toward confronting Zionism⁴¹⁶.

Contacts between Syria and Iraq continued after Camp David and Saddam Hussein's coming to power. However there was an atmosphere of constant mistrust and rivalry between the two countries. That was the reason why Assad rejected Iraq's proposals concerning practical unity of the two sides and deployment of Iraqi troops in Syria's territory. The dissensions between Damascus and Baghdad reached their climax in the summer of 1979 when, on Iraq's initiative the relations between Syria and Iraq were broken off. In 1980 Baghdad expelled Syria's Ambassador on a charge of scheming a plot aimed at overthrowing S. Hussein's administration. The Syrian-Iraqi attempts at rapprochement failed, and what is more, during the Iran-Iraqi prolonged and exhausting war Damascus inclined towards Iran.

Iran and Saudi Arabia regarded by Damascus as the most appropriate partners to promote Syria's regional rating. The revolution in Iran and Syria's developing relations with it enabled Damascus definitely to strengthen its political position having a new powerful ally in the region, on

⁴¹⁶ Journal of Palestine Studies, 8/2, 1979, pp. 200 – 202.

the one hand, and on the other hand, anti-Western and anti-American forces got a fresh impetus.

As for Saudi Arabia, it was an influential country rendering Syria not only financial but (at decisive moments) political assistance as well. This was quite evident in legalizing Syria's presence in Lebanon and later in Taif Agreement. In the second term of Carter's administration an extremely important issue emerged in Syrian-American relations, an issue which greatly affected the bilateral relations later. In 1976 the US Congress adopted a decision on "Promoting International Security and Controlling Arms Export." In terms of its item 303 it was prohibited to render assistance to those countries which supported or had some connection with international terrorism. In 1979 the Congress adopted a new decision according to which the US State Department and Department of Commerce were to inform the Congress about those countries whose import of goods and technologies from the USA were worth more than 7 million dollars in case those countries supported international terrorism. According to that decision the Department of State was to prepare an annual list of such countries. Since 1979 up to the present Syria has been included in that list and has been prone to the limitations of assistance and commerce⁴¹⁷.

The revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan aroused some confusion in the American political elite compelling them to review some principles of American Middle Eastern policy. In January, 1980, Z. Brzezinski appealed to the leader of the United States to form a "security circle"⁴¹⁸ of Middle Eastern countries against the Soviet Union. A few days later Carter stated. "The gradual expansion of Soviet military presence as well as the unprecedented increase of the US and western countries, dependence on vitally important Middle Eastern oil deliveries pose serious danger to the American interests." Carter noted that under the circumstances it was necessary to strengthen Quick Deployment Forces, enlarge the circle of regional security, indirectly support the Afghan opposing forces and warn Moscow that any invasion in the Gulf countries would receive a strong American response."⁴¹⁹ Thus Carter declared the new American so-called "Carter's Doctrine" according to which:

⁴¹⁷ CRS (Congressional Research Service) Issue Brief, May 3, 1995, p. 11

⁴¹⁸ "The New York Times", 21.01.1980.

⁴¹⁹ "Washington Post", 22.01.1980.

1. Among the problems of providing security in the Middle East, particularly in the Gulf region, special importance was attached to the East-West confrontation;
2. Special emphasis was laid on the possibilities of enlarging the immediate American military presence in the region⁴²⁰.

In order to provide appropriate military counteraction in case there was direct threat to the USA interests Carter proposed that the Congress adopt a decision to record all the citizens aged 18 – 26 with the aim of drafting later. He also demanded the military expenditure be increased by 5 per cent⁴²¹.

Assad tried to oppose the new American strategy by abrupt increase in Soviet assistance and arms deliveries. In the period of 1979–1983 Syria received from the Soviet Union more than 10 billion worth of military assistance, twice as much as the US annual assistance to Israel⁴²². As one of the top officials of the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, "Assad will try to prove that the way to peace in the region passes through Damascus". To this end Assad has to show the Americans that Syria is able to strike the US regional positions⁴²³. So Syria was gradually involved in confrontation with the USA which required significant financial-economic expenditure from Damascus. We should not forget that the second half of the 1970-s was a period of economic progress for Syria. The financial influx from the Arab countries of the Gulf as well as the profits from the oil pipeline resulted in unprecedented (13 per cent annually) economic growth. Perhaps these achievements can account for Assad's refusal from the idea of forming a pan-Arab Resistance Front and his will to establish "strategic balance with the Zionist enemy" alone, relying on the country's forces.

In that situation, Syria, despite its initial "unfriendly" attitude to PLO, tried to improve the relations with the latter allowing the Palestinian refugees' camps to be used for partisan attacks on Israel.

⁴²⁰ Eagle Defiant – US Foreign Policy in the 1980's. Es. Kenneth A Oye. The Reagan Administration and the Middle East, p.373.

⁴²¹ Garthooff, Raymond. Detente and Confrontation: American – Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan, pp. 952-955

⁴²² Cordesman, Anthony. "The Middle East and the Cost of the Politics of Force", Middle East Journal, vol. 40. Winter 1986, p. 1.

⁴²³ "Time", 19.12.1983. "Syria: Bidding for a Better Role".

Syria's invasion of Lebanon was not appreciated by the majority of the Syrian population. Moreover it gave rise to dissatisfaction aggravating the internal political situation and resulting in a number of assassination attempts against state officials. Assad's administration was greatly endangered by "Ikhvan al-Muslimin" (Muslim Brotherhood), a Muslim extremist group, which was generally against Damascus' secular administration.⁴²⁴

In June, 1979 this group killed 32 cadets of Aleppo Artillery School. It was mainly directed against the Alawites. The purpose of this act was to undermine the foundations of the administration "by disrupting the internal front". The strikes that ensued were forcefully suppressed by the authorities. In June, 1980, after an assassination attempt against Assad failed, about 200-300 political prisoners were killed in Tadmour prison. At the end of 1970-s the enormous security system of the country, including 20-30-thousand secret police (Moukhabarat) and 15-thousand guarding forces headed by Assad's brother Rifaat al-Assad,⁴²⁵ grew bigger.

Carter's last attempts to activate the problem of Palestinian autonomy failed leaving the next American administration a legacy of a knot of regional problems more complicated and entangled than ever. The inability of Carter's administration to exert pressure on Begin's government urging towards the settlement of Palestine problem eventually brought Camp David Agreement into disrepute in most Arab countries, isolated Egypt and reduced the reputation of the USA as a fair peacemaker.

In 1980 Ronald Reagan was elected US President. He was more dedicated to the idea of strengthening cooperation with Israel. Later Reagan wrote, "The necessity of providing Israel's vitality was one of the deepest convictions in my life"⁴²⁶. Coming into the White House Reagan, emphasizing the fact of the East-West confrontation in all the international conflicts, undertook the formation of a new policy based on a number of new principles:

1. Any threat posed to the security of oil-exporting Gulf countries is a key problem for the USA;
2. The Arab-Israeli conflict is less important and worrying, so it does not require urgent steps;
3. The Arab-Israeli conflict area and that of the Gulf are considered to be two different regions with their own peculiarities of development;
4. All the countries of the region are in need of protection from the danger posed by the Soviet Union.

The conclusion drawn from the afore mentioned principles was that the USA was to involve all its allies in a system which would be able to curb the Soviet expansion providing the security of the Gulf countries and free access of the West to the oil resources. In short this was the so-called policy of "strategic consensus" that was so much spoken about in the first days of Reagan's presidency. Yet later the American administration had to admit, in the face of certain developments and particularly after the Lebanese war, the importance and interdependence of all Middle Eastern conflicts as well as the fact that regional policy could not be reduced to a mere East-West confrontation. The new Middle Eastern military doctrine of the USA, "considering the fact that only the USA could confront Moscow", envisaged direct American military presence in the region. It meant that Washington did not exclude the possibility of direct military interference. As for the US "client" Arab countries of the region, they were to place bases at the USA's disposal and render technical assistance. Based on this strategy the American-Israeli deepening relations were considered by the US Department of State to be the major counterbalance to the "Empire of Evil", the USSR, and its "clients" Syria and the Palestinians. In September 1981, after the USA-Israeli Memorandum of Strategic Understanding was signed, Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that the American-Israeli alliance foresaw serious quantitative changes in the correlation of forces in the region. He noticed that the USA's strategic involvement in the region incited overall crisis and gave fresh impetus to Israel's aggressive policy⁴²⁷. Syrian mass media observed that "aggressive Israel", assisted by the USA, posed danger to Syria. Syria grew more concerned in mid-November, after the joint Egyptian-American maneuvers. Syria could not help worrying about the inability of the American leadership to check Israel's aggressive and belligerent policy. Damascus was

⁴²⁴ "Muslim Brothers" (Ikhvan al-Muslimin) was founded in Egypt in March, 1928. Its founder was Hassan al-Banna, a teacher by profession. The organization advocates a state based on Islamic values, though the leaders of the organization believe themselves to be "Islam reformers and builders of a new society". The activity of the organization is banned in many Arab countries.

⁴²⁵ *ibid*

⁴²⁶ Reagan, Ronald. *An American Life*, p. 409.

⁴²⁷ *Middle East Contemporary Survey, 1981-1982*, p. 855.

sure the new American strategy violated the balance between Israel and Syria and posed serious danger to Syria's national security.

For Damascus the only way of confronting that danger was to deepen the relations with Moscow, raising them to a new level. Taking advantage of the situation the Soviet Union, in its turn, was trying to strengthen its positions in Syria. Damascus had become Moscow's major, most important "client" in the Near East. Most central, if not all, problems concerning the realization of the Soviet policy in the region were connected with Damascus⁴²⁸.

Damascus continually underscored the necessity of concluding a "strategic agreement" with the USSR similar to that of the USA and Israel. The Syrian side believed that the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation, concluded with Moscow in 1980, had a number of weak points. One of them was the absence of a clause concerning the Syrian presence in Lebanon which acquired extremely important significance during the war in June, 1982. The Soviet Union, for certain reasons, refused to sign either a strategic memorandum or any other document of similar kind. This made the Syrians adopt a more yielding, conciliatory bearing towards the USA, particularly after the war in Lebanon in June. However, it should be noted that despite the strained relations with the USA Damascus strove to maintain the communication channels with Washington and continued official contacts. The visits of Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abd al-Halim Khaddam and Assad's brother Rifaat al-Assad to Washington and those of American envoys Philip Habib and Maurice Draper to Damascus testify to this fact.

The "friendship" with the Soviet Union which could be called a "calculating marriage" did not run smoothly either. Thus in February, 1981, the delegation of top officials of the USSR Ministry of Defense visited Damascus and once again raised the problem of deploying Soviet military bases in Syria, something which had been proposed a number of times before. H. Assad had constantly made efforts to avoid deploying any foreign forces in Syria. But in a situation when the increasing crisis in Lebanon was under way Damascus consented to grant the Soviet ships the right to use the Syrian ports for unimpeded entrance and exit, to deploy a military base in

Tartus (second largest city port in Syria) as well as to make joint use of Tifor Airport. It was arranged to sign a corresponding agreement concerning the above-said. As Russian diplomat O. Grinievsky remarks, "The Syrians' intentions varied. Consenting to the deployment of Soviet military bases they were not at all concerned about the geopolitical interests of the Soviet Union. They simply wanted the Soviet missiles to serve Syria as a shield in case there was a war with Israel. At the last moment Assad put forward a condition: "the Soviet Union was to deploy two missile regiments on the Syrian-Israeli border and one regiment in the vicinity of Damascus for protection. The missiles were to be deployed together with Soviet military staff"⁴²⁹.

USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Gromyko did not deny the military-political importance of the Soviet bases in Syria, but he did not approve of sending soldiers there. In Gromyko's opinion in the case of a Syrian-Israeli clash Moscow could not provide the Soviet military with necessary support, and the latter might become hostages. That would have involved the Soviet Union in an overall conflict.⁴³⁰ Anyway no Soviet military bases were deployed in Syria. The reason for it was the delay on the Syrian side as the latter was busy with stabilizing the situation on the Arab-Israeli front. Later, when Israel invaded Lebanon, the Syrian proposal of immediate deployment of bases was not answered by the USSR.

Never trusting Moscow fully Damascus tried to solve the security problems by Soviet help. In all the other spheres Assad succeeded in providing Syria's independence from Moscow⁴³¹. Exercising a calculating policy Assad was confident that the USSR had no alternative as Syria was the only country where the former could strengthen its strategic positions. It was the absence of rivals and the fact of being exceptional that was skillfully used by Syria's leader in its relations with Moscow.

⁴²⁹ Гриневский О. Сценарий для третьей мировой войны. Как Израиль чуть не стал ее причиной, с.31. Oleg Grinevsky. Scenario for the Third World war. /in Russian/

⁴³⁰ *ibid*, p.52

⁴³¹ A vivid example of this was the fact of Syrian troops' entrance in Lebanon, which was realized with the US approval. The Syrians did not inform Moscow about it beforehand, what is more, they did not inform about it to USSR Chairman of the Council of Minister A. Kossygin who was in Damascus at that time, and the latter found himself in a confusing situation. Примаков Е. Конфиденциально: Ближний Восток на сцене и за кулисами (вторая половина XX-начало XXI века), с.186-187.

⁴²⁸ In 1981 Syria occupied the first place in the sphere of Soviet military deliveries. Moscow sent to Damascus \$15 billion worth of armaments including airplanes, helicopters, anti-aircraft missiles, aircraft "air-air" missiles, 500 tanks and armoured cars. Гриневский О. Сценарий для третьей мировой войны. Как Израиль чуть не стал ее причиной, с.54

Israel's Invasion of Lebanon in 1982

At the end of 1976, after establishing certain stability in Lebanon the Christian forces ("Lebanese Forces" headed by Bashir Gemayel, Maronites' Militia and the Lebanese (Christian) Front headed by Camille Chamoun) began to oppose to the Syrians' presence in the country. Moreover, the Israeli government, particularly after Begin had come to power, openly began to cooperate with them. Begin, like his predecessor, considered the Christians' problem to be not only political and humanitarian but ideological and politico-strategic as well. He was confident that Israel was to help the Christians in the struggle against the "fanatic" Muslim enemy⁴³². Relying on the Israeli support and Begin's personal sympathy for their struggle the Maronites made attempts to incite a clash between Israel and the Syrian army deployed in Lebanon but they failed.

Nevertheless the Israeli army made attempts not to collide with the Syrians forces, which were counteracting PLO in South Lebanon. For instance, in August, 1978, Begin turned down Gemayel and Chamoun's request to strike the Syrian troops from the air, though he declared that Israel could not remain indifferent in case Syria committed "genocide" against the Lebanese Christians. In July, 1978 Israeli airplanes made a circle over Beirut as if warning against attacking Christians. In the first half of 1979 the Israeli Air Force attacked the Palestinian camp a number of times. On June 29, 5 Israeli airplanes were hit over the town of Sidon due to the interference of Syrian planes. The internal political situation was growing worse. Taking advantage of the weakened position of Syria after the conclusion of the Egyptian-Israeli Agreement in Camp David and Syria's difficulties in Lebanon at the end of 1980 Gemayel took control of the Christian town of Zahle in the Plain of Bekaa in East Lebanon. In April, 1981, when the Syrian forces tried to throw out the Christian "Lebanese forces" from Zahle, Gemayel asked Israel for help. The latter hit two Syrian freight helicopters in the surroundings of that town. In answer to this, having concluded the Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation with the USSR on May 8, Syria declared that Soviet anti-aircraft missiles would be deployed in the surroundings of Zahle and on the Lebanese border.

To prevent possible unleashing of a Syrian-Israeli war and confrontation with Moscow Reagan sent Philip Habib, an experienced diplomat, to the region. The latter succeeded in declaring a temporary armistice between Syria and Israel⁴³³. Then the USA put forward a version of overall settlement of the Lebanese crisis that envisaged withdrawal of the Syrian troops from Lebanon, including missiles from Zahle and the PLO heavy artillery from South Lebanon as well as curbing Israeli military actions in South Lebanon. However, neither side was ready to accept the American proposal. The Palestinians continued their attacks, and a month later Israel delivered an air blow to the PLO Headquarters in Beirut in the result of which 200 people were killed and 800 were wounded. This was followed by heavy exchange of fire along the Israeli-Lebanese border. Though Washington shared Israel's concern about the Palestinians' increasing influence in Lebanon it supported the realization of "limited" actions against the matter. Yet assisted by Saudi Arabia Ph. Habibi managed to conclude one more truce, this time between Israel and the Palestinians.

There are several reasons for the aggravation of the situation in Lebanon: the Palestinians' increasing influence, activation of the Christian Maronites, Damascus' decision to withdraw certain sub-units from Lebanon for financial scruples, the change in Syria's policy towards PLO (the former strove to improve the relations and use the Palestinians' camps to make attacks on Israel which failed). All this came to violate the fragile balance between the opposing forces in Lebanon. The picture will be complete if we consider the internal political events in Israel in 1981. Ariel Sharon and Yitzhak Shamir holding extremist views were appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defense respectively and they became the champions of the new Israeli belligerent policy. The new American administration's policy made Israeli authorities more self-confident thus greatly promoting war in Lebanon. In October, 1981 the Americans knew about the Israeli preparations for invading Lebanon but they did nothing to prevent it⁴³⁴.

After declaring Jerusalem Israel's "eternal and indivisible capital" on July 30, 1980, the Israeli Parliament, taking advantage of the fact that the

⁴³³ Haig, Alexander. *Caveat: Realism, Reagan, and Foreign Policy*. 1984, p.180.

⁴³⁴ Secretary of State Haig learnt about the coming Israeli invasion of Lebanon in Egypt, during Anwar Sadat's funeral. Moreover, on May 26, 1982, Haig made a speech in Chicago and appealed for "international actions" in order to put end to the civil war in Lebanon. Some analysts consider this speech to be a "green light" for the Israeli invasion.

⁴³² Maoz, Moshe. *Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking*, p.168

USA and the USSR were busy with Poland's problem, adopted a law (with 63 votes in favour and 21 votes against) in terms of which the Israeli laws and governing were in force in the Golans occupied in the war of 1967. This in fact meant annexation of the Syrian area. The war of 1967 made 100 thousand Syrians leave the Golans. At the time the law was adopted – the Golans were inhabited by 15-18 thousand Druzes, whom Israeli authorities had allowed to return after the war, and 12 thousand Jews. UN Security Council Resolution 497 declared the Israeli law concerning the Golans to be "invalid and lacking international legal force"⁴³⁵. Syria defined this law as "declaration of war, violation of the truce, trampling the UN laws, a step against peace in the region"⁴³⁶. Though in November 1981, Assad did not take part in the conference held in Saudi Arabia, rejecting the project put forward by King Fahd, he visited Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries in order to organize a united Arab counteraction. In February, 1982, the meeting of the Arab countries' Ministers of Foreign Affairs was held in Tunisia where the intention of deepening the relations with friendly, particularly Muslim, non-aligned and socialist countries was re-affirmed. The meeting also condemned the US policy in the Near East, in particular, the assistance rendered to Israel⁴³⁷.

Washington did not approve of the Israeli law either. The Americans hastened to nullify the Memorandum of Strategic Understanding signed with Israel in 1981 and to suspend the \$300 million worth of arms deliveries "temporarily". This last circumstance did not seem to worry the Israeli leaders, moreover, meeting US Ambassador to Israel Lewis Begin self-confidently announced that his country was able to make independent decisions and "Israel is not a banana republic"⁴³⁸.

After the decision of the Israeli Knesset, when Damascus' hopes to provide American assistance at UN Security Council did not come up to their expectations, Damascus adopted an anti-American posture, while the Speaker of the Syrian Parliament, Mahmoud al-Zoubi appealed to the Arab countries "to break off diplomatic relations with the USA"⁴³⁹.

⁴³⁵ Maoz Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, p.1 93.

⁴³⁶ Middle East Contemporary Survey, Syria, 1981-82, p.856.

⁴³⁷ *ibid*, p.856

⁴³⁸ Maoz Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, p. 172

⁴³⁹ *ibid*, p.868

The internal political events in Syria in 1982 intensified the strained Syrian-American relations when the protests and demonstrations of the Muslim Sunni opposition reached their zenith in the town of Hama. According to official Damascus' information Moujaheds occupied government offices, the Government House, the police, the prisons, the intelligence and defense centers. The punitive operations undertaken by the government put on end to the rebellion, about 500 people were killed⁴⁴⁰.

Only after the US department of State issued a statement about "a large-scale war" in Hama did Damascus expand intensive counter-advocacy by mass media. It is curious that only eight days after the events had begun in Hama, Damascus stated "some agitation incited by "Ikhvan al-Muslimin" occurred in Hama". In those days Assad gave the Italian TV an interview in which he underscored the following:

- Ikhvan al-Muslimin is a reactionary organization;
- Ikhvan al-Muslimin is anti-Islam since true Islam pursues progress, love and brotherhood;
- Ikhvan al-Muslimin serves the United States⁴⁴¹.

With respect to the last statement it must be noted that Assad's statements coincided with those made by the US Department of State. This led Damascus to conclude that Hama events had been backed by Washington with the aim of destabilizing the situation in the country and subsequently overthrowing Assad's administration. Most likely it was a chance coincidence though it is not quite clear why Reagan's "anti-Syrian" administration nullified some commercial limitations with Syria. This step can perhaps be substantiated by Washington's fear that further intensification of the situation might result in instability in the region. Weakening of the extremist Muslims' posture was in favour not only of Syria but of the USA and other Arab countries as well. Otherwise "the Brothers' "success might have caused a chain reaction and posed actual danger to a number of Arab regimes.

While controversies, dissensions and "continual psychological degradation "in the Arab world were growing deeper calls for military interference in Lebanon were raised more and more frequently in Israel.

⁴⁴⁰ About 1200 soldiers of the Syrian army took part in the actions. The information concerning the number of the killed varies from 3.000 to 20.000.

⁴⁴¹ Maoz Moshe. Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking, p. 852

No doubt that Israel had stepped on the way of waging war. Six months before invading Lebanon Israeli Minister of Defence Ariel Sharon substantiated Israel's strategy, "To turn into a great power Israel must, first of all, take possession of those southern districts of Lebanon where the attacks on Israel are made from". Sharon considered it necessary to eliminate PLO in Beirut completely and not only from the military viewpoint. Sharon thought that the realization of the above-mentioned action would disorganize and demoralize the Palestinian opposition in the Gaza Strip and on the West Bank. The next step was to bring to power the Maronite government consisting chiefly of Kataibs⁴⁴² in Beirut and sign a peace agreement thus "neutralizing" Lebanon. After that Israel was going to encourage the emigration of the Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to Jordan, which was to turn into Palestine gradually. Such course of events was going to destabilize the situation in Jordan, which was to enable Sharon to interfere and form a new government and subsequently conclude a peace agreement with Jordan as well. In this way Syria as the only "front" country was to find itself isolated. Under the circumstances cooperating with Saudi Arabia by means of Jordan Sharon expected Israel to become "an influential Afro-Asian force"⁴⁴³. Further invasion of Lebanon by Israel completely met the demands of Sharon's strategy.

Vice-Mayor of Jerusalem was sure that the actual aim of the war of 1982 was "the elimination of the Palestinian political and intellectual centre established and developed in Beirut within the last years"⁴⁴⁴. No doubt, elimination of PLO and formation of a pro-Israeli government was inevitably to have resulted in the withdrawal of the Syrian forces from the country. So it would not do to believe the assurances of the Israeli government that Israel did not, want a war with Syria⁴⁴⁵.

Aiming at obtaining American support in forming a new political regime in Lebanon, Sharon constantly emphasized the importance of Israel's operations in the process of weakening the pro-Soviet forces in the Middle East – Syria and PLO. State Secretary Haig's extremely anti-Soviet views, his strong bias in favour of regarding the events in the Middle East within the

⁴⁴² Party of Phalangist (Kataib), Christian Maronites.

⁴⁴³ Zeev Schiff. Lebanon: Motivations and Interest in Israel's Policy. *Middle East Journal*, 38, 1984, p.220

⁴⁴⁴ New York Review of Books, October 13, 1983

⁴⁴⁵ Avi-Ran R. The War of Lebanon: Arab Documents (Hebrew; Tel-Aviv, 1987)

framework of universal confrontation as well as his firm conviction that Israel was the USA's important and powerful ally, facilitated the realization of Sharon's task. In May, 1982, a meeting of Sharon and Haig took place at which the latter noted that the United States would not object to Israel's "limited military actions" in Lebanon provided there was sufficient ground for them⁴⁴⁶. A convenient opportunity did not make them wait long. After an unsuccessful assassination attempt in London on Israel's Ambassador Shlomo Argov made by a Palestinian terrorist (from Abu Nidal's group), on June 6, 1982, Israel broke into Lebanon, hypocritically calling the military operation "Peace to Galilee". At the time of the invasion the Syrian 26-28-thousand army was deployed in Lebanon, concentrated in Shtora. They were aided by the so-called "Al-Foursan al-Arab", the Syrian militia, under the command of Rifaat, Assad's brother. The militia was mainly in the surroundings of Tripoli. Syria immediately accused Washington of the Israeli attack. The pro-American and reactionary Arab regimes were severely criticized as well. At the outset of the attack Syria quite definitely expressed its willingness and determination to defend Lebanon.

The US policy toward the Lebanese crisis has much been elaborated upon but almost all the researches lack impartial analysis of US policy towards Syria. That is the reason why I deem it necessary to underline the following:

- Following a definitely anti-Soviet and anti-terrorist policy Reagan's administration did not pursue an elaborated, consistent policy towards Syria. Very often it followed the development of the events without trying to make an impact on them;
- Considering Syria to pose the greatest threat to regional security Washington underestimated Syria's important role in the Middle East and was unable to be in constant touch with Damascus therefore the USA failed to understand the actual motives and goals of the policy pursued by Damascus in Lebanon.

It is to the point to note that, unlike the USA, the Soviet Union followed a very balanced, cautious policy. Washington deployed its military units, in particular the Marine Corps in Beirut under the name of peacemaking forces whereas Moscow abstained from acting beside the Syrian forces, i.e. from direct military interference.

⁴⁴⁶ Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. XVII, No.1, Autumn 1987.

On June 26, 1982, H. Assad secretly arrived in Moscow. During the meetings with Soviet leaders he asked for \$7 billion worth of armaments as well as \$1 billion worth of military equipment, provided by the previous agreements, to be sent to Syria as soon as possible. Then Assad suggested sending to Syria missile systems and aircraft together with Soviet experts to maintain those systems and teach the Syrians to maintain them. Moscow answered that they would send their military specialists only to act as instructors, i.e. to organize Syrians' instruction in Syria. This proposal made the Soviet standpoint quite distinct: to lend the Arabs a helping hand abstaining at the same time from being directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict and preventing the Soviet personnel from participating in the war⁴⁴⁷.

Washington's policy, that did not take the political, religious and ethnic motives of the Lebanese crisis into consideration, resulted in the American Marines' becoming a target for the Shias and Druzes. Moreover, the American intervention on the pretext of supporting the Maronites, and a short time later the ignominious withdrawal of the American forces from Lebanon delivered a heavy blow to US reputation in the Arab world.

On June 9 Washington used its right of veto during the voting at UN Security Council concerning the Israeli intervention and at the same time sent its envoy Philip Habib to the region to conclude a truce and to strengthen the American position in the Arab world.

This dual behavior of the American administration can, perhaps, be assigned to the disagreements between State Secretary A. Haig and US President's adviser on national security W. Clark, disagreements which finally resulted in Haig's resignation. USSR Ambassador to the USA A. Dobrinin recollects his conversation with Haig during which the latter said angrily the people from the Reagan's Californian close circle were "ignoramus" and "pigmies in the sphere of foreign policy"⁴⁴⁸.

A vivid example of the above-said is the fact that Clark, without informing the State Secretary, got in touch with Saudi Arabia with whose help he let the Palestinians know that the USA intended to impose pressure on Israel in order to provide PLO members' safe removal from Lebanon. This served as a ground for Arafat to think that there was no need to hasten

⁴⁴⁷ Гринеvский О. Сценарий для третьей мировой войны. Как Израиль чуть не стал ее причиной, с.208-212. O.Grinevsky. Scenario for the Third World War., p.208-212. /in Russian/.

⁴⁴⁸ Добрынин А.Ф. Сугубо доверительно, с.531.

the Palestinian forces' withdrawal from Lebanon. Because of this diplomatic error the war continued with all its negative consequences.

Thus, without waiting for Haig's request of resignation, Reagan was the first to tell the former, "I hear you have decided to resign, and I have decided to consent to your resignation"⁴⁴⁹.

As for Habib's mission, it definitely pursued maintaining American contacts with Syria⁴⁵⁰. During the meetings in Damascus on June 10-13 Habib negotiated with the Syrians on the possibilities of truce and handed them Begin's note in which Israel's Prime Minister assured the Syrian leadership that Israel would not attack West Beirut⁴⁵¹.

Due to Habib's mediatory activity Israel and Syria agreed to a truce on June 11. Yet, according to some authors, without Begin's consent, the Israeli troops commanded by Sharon and Chief of Staff of Israeli Defense Forces R. Eitan, moved in the direction of the Western part the Damascus-Beirut highway and besieged Beirut⁴⁵². The Israeli army managed to approach Beirut, having defeated the Syrian army by destroying 50-100 planes, 145 tanks as well as the missile system in Bekaa⁴⁵³. Israel continued the military actions until June 25. The Palestinian opposition was suppressed, and its members had to leave Lebanon seeking refuge in Arab countries. According to the arrangement between Israel and PLO, the political headquarters of the PLO as well as a 600 – soldier sub-unit were to remain in Beirut temporarily. Despite the demands and pressure of the Americans Israel renewed the bombardment of Beirut, which cost the city a great deal of material damage as well as a great number of human lives. According to an agreement signed at the end of August PLO left Lebanon and settled down in Tunisia⁴⁵⁴.

⁴⁴⁹ Гринеvский О. Сценарий для третьей мировой войны. Как Израиль чуть не стал ее причиной, с.213-214

⁴⁵⁰ Примаков Е. М. История одного сговора, с.275.

⁴⁵¹ Though Primakov mentioned the Syrian forces deployed in Bekaa it must be emphasized that Israel had carried out a large-scale attack on the military subunits and missile system before that, on June 9-10 with the aim of getting to the Beirut-Damascus highway.

⁴⁵² Avi-Ran R. Syrian Involvement in Lebanon, 1975-1985, p.138; Evron Y. War and the Intervention in Lebanon: The Israeli-Syrian Deterrence dialogue, p. 299.

⁴⁵³ In general the numbers of the planes varies, according to different sources, from 20 to 100.

⁴⁵⁴ After the truce Syria consented to receive the PLO but later, under Saudi Arabia's pressure, refused to do so. See Caufman B. The Arab Middle East and the US, p.128.

During the war the Syrian army suffered heavy losses: 400 soldiers were kicked and 1400 were wounded⁴⁵⁵. Though the outcome of the war was absolutely negative for Syria the official mass media considered the war to be triumphant. On June 19 Assad made a speech addressed to the people in which he underscored the principal nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict, as a clash of two civilizations. In his speech Assad also enlarged upon the political aspect of the Lebanese crisis:

- The United States fully supported Israel;
- The goal of the war was to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict on conditions favourable for the USA and Israel;
- The war was against the Palestinian Opposition and Lebanese national movement.

Nevertheless, after the war, Assad's yearning for closer relations with the United States, in our opinion, looked like a peculiar confession and the result of realizing rather the defeat than the victory.

On June 19 starting for their visits to the Gulf countries the Syrian top officials asked those countries, Saudi Arabia in particular, to persuade Washington to press Israel to withdraw its forces from Lebanon.

On June 20-21, 1982, Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Abd al-Halim Khaddam was in Washington as a delegate of the League of Arab Countries. After the meeting with Reagan he said, "At present Syria's efforts are focused on the problem of removing the Israeli forces from the territory of Lebanon"⁴⁵⁶. In August Assad's brother Rifaat al-Assad, who was a member of the Ba'ath regional leadership and the commander of the select military units in defence, was in Washington. American sources stated that the visit of Assad's brother was of personal nature, and none of the American top officials was going to meet him. Some Syrian sources announced that it was connected with "health problems". Some others assured that he had bought an expensive house in Washington since he had quarreled with Assad and had to leave Syria and was most likely to settle down in the United States⁴⁵⁷. Certain other sources noted that Assad had sent his brother to Washington to find out if there was a chance of making a deal on Lebanon with the USA and Israel. This view sounds more probable as the presence of

⁴⁵⁵ Moshe Maoz. *Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking*, Claredon Press, Oxford, 1995, p.175

⁴⁵⁶ Middle East Contemporary Survey, Syria, p.868.

⁴⁵⁷ *ibid*, p.868

Israel's Defence Minister Sharon in Washington at the same time testifies to it⁴⁵⁸. US President Reagan, no doubt, wanted not only PLO but also Syria to withdraw from Lebanon. He also wanted Lebanon to remain as a buffer country between Syria and Israel. But he did but support Begin's claims to create Maronite Lebanon "patronized" by Israel⁴⁵⁹.

On September 1, 1982, Reagan put forward "a peace project" calling for the withdrawal of all the foreign forces from Lebanon. Rejecting the idea of creating a Palestinian state he suggested establishing Palestinian self-rule on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip in confederation with Jordan⁴⁶⁰.

This new American project, published immediately a day after the complete withdrawal of the troops from Beirut, once again revealed the anti-Syrian nature of Washington's policy. The American President's new diplomatic initiative did not mention the problem of the Golans at all. Besides creating Palestinian autonomy with Jordan, it meant to involve Jordan and the Palestinians (not PLO) in the Arab-Israeli peacemaking process. No doubt, the realization of the afore-mentioned American project, which overlooked Syria, was going to promote further isolation of this Arab country so important in the region. On September 14, 1982, after an attempt on President Bashir Gemayel's⁴⁶¹ life and killing hundreds of Palestinians in the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila, the situation went from bad to worse. Washington demanded that Israel immediately withdraw its troops from Beirut. Reagan ordered the American navy that had left the country after the evacuation of PLO, to return to Lebanon. At the same time the US President demanded that the leaders of the Arab countries impose pressure on Syria with the aim of withdrawing its troops deployed in Lebanon. Reagan

⁴⁵⁸ However the information of the mass media concerning the conflict of the two brothers was not groundless. The most serious conflict between them occurred after November, 1983, when Assad's health grew drastically worse, and Rifaat made an attempt to seize power. This was the reason why he had to leave for Europe in 1985, and he returned to Syria only in 1992 to participate in the funeral ceremony of his 82-year-old mother.

⁴⁵⁹ Patrick Seale. *of Syria. The Struggle for the Middle East*. Berkeley, 1988, p.387

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid*, p.402

⁴⁶¹ Bashir Gemayel was the son of Pierre Gemayel, the founder of the Party of Phalangist (Kataib) Christian Maronites. In 1976 he was Commander of the Forces (right-wing) and after the Israeli intervention, on August 23, 1982, he became Lebanon's President. Closely cooperating with Israel he struggled not only against PLO and Syrian presence in Lebanon but also against his political opponents among the Maronites. So in 1978 he initiated military operations against Frangiye's family and in 1980 he eliminated Camille Chamoun's National Party.

held the view that after the withdrawal of the Syrian troops he would be able to persuade Israel to do the same⁴⁶². Such was the situation in 1982, so under the circumstances, Syria accepted Reagan's project in October. The American envoys were informed that Syria agreed to the idea of parallel withdrawal of the Israeli and Syrian troops. Yet Reagan's project was not realized mainly because of the declinatory posture of Israel and the PLO as well as for the reason that Jordan refused to participate in the negotiations without the Palestinians' authorization.

At the end of 1982 the USA focused on concluding an Israeli-Lebanese Agreement, which was going to be followed by the withdrawal of the foreign forces. Here again the American administration assigned a secondary role to Syria. According to Washington the latter was to join the process only after Israel and Lebanon had concluded an agreement.

Lebanon became the apple of discord about which the interests of the USA and Syria clashed giving rise, for the first time, to the danger of direct confrontation of the two countries. Washington increased its political and military assistance to Lebanon and its President Amin Gemayel. Damascus was, indeed, aware that the USA strove for a Maronite government in Lebanon, which was to turn the country into a peace-loving and open neighbor for Israel but not under the latter's control. All this, undoubtedly, posed much more serious political and military threat to Syria than Camp David Deal. To counteract the American policy Syria made efforts to prevent the conclusion of the agreement between Lebanon and Israel. Damascus' logic was as follows: "If we are unable to establish peace on conditions favourable for us, then we should not allow such peace that overlooks us"⁴⁶³. To this end Syria undertook the work of restoring and re-arming its army with the Soviet Union's help. Simultaneously Syria opposed its military-political cooperation with the Shia Amal forces, Hezbollah (patronized by Iran) and the Druze militia headed by Walid Jumblatt to the alliance of Israel, the USA and the Maronite phalangists in Lebanon⁴⁶⁴. Thus Israel's

⁴⁶² Shultz, George. *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, pp. 107-111.

⁴⁶³ *The Foreign Policies of Arab States*, Bahgat Korany and Ali E. Hillaal Dessouki, Westview. Press, London, 1984, p. 315

⁴⁶⁴ The relations between Syria and the USSR, that had grown worse since the Lebanese crisis, began to improve after Brezhnev's death when Y. Andropov consented to deliver to Syria \$2.5 billion worth of military equipment, anti-aircraft missiles included; Apart from this 8000 Soviet military experts trained the Syrian army and helped them to maintain the armaments and equipment.

temporary victory in Lebanon compelled Syria to carry on new strategy. Syria increased its military potential with Soviet help, deepened its relations with Teheran aiming at joint struggle against Israeli, American and French objects and military units in Lebanon. One of the Syrian top diplomats remarked, "Under the circumstances Assad will do his best to convince the Americans that the way to peace passes through Damascus and that Syria is able to deliver a blow even to the USA"⁴⁶⁵. And sure enough, in April-September, 1983, the pro-Iranian grouping of Hezbollah several times attacked the Americans and the French in Lebanon. On April 18 a lorry was blown up near the American Embassy in Beirut killing 63 people 17 out of whom were Americans. On October 23 the American and French barracks were exploded, 241 Americans and 58 Frenchmen were killed⁴⁶⁶.

The attack on the American Embassy turned the problem of the American military presence in Lebanon into a key issue demanding immediate solution. The opinions in the American administration varied. Defence Minister C. Weinberger objected to the inclusion of the Americans in the multi-national peacemaking forces. The Pentagon, on the one hand believed such a peacemaking mission to seriously jeopardize the American sub-units especially in the conditions when they opposed the Israeli and Syrian outnumbering forces. On the other hand, State Secretary Shultz insisted on the American military presence in Lebanon substantiating his standpoint by the argument that the withdrawal of the American forces from Lebanon under the terrorists' pressure was inadmissible.

The opinions concerning the US policy towards Syria varied in the American administration too. Shultz supported using force against Syria, whereas the Defence Secretary considered diplomatic means to be prior in the relations with Syria. Shultz' reason for his opinion was that Syria "would listen to the USA when it saw that the USA and Israel were together". In other words Shultz considered Israel to be a strategic ally while Weinberger regarded their relations with Israel as mere commitment. The Secretary of Defence believed, "the goodwill of the progressive Arab countries to be of vital importance for the defence of American interests in the Gulf jeopardized by their close military and

⁴⁶⁵ *ibid*, p.241

⁴⁶⁶ Schieffer, Bob & Gates, Gary Paul. *The Acting President*, pp.215-216

economic relations with Israel"⁴⁶⁷. Reagan shared State Secretary Shultz' viewpoint which was confirmed by National Security Decision Directive 111 in October 1983⁴⁶⁸. In May Shultz arrived in the Middle East to discuss the possibilities of concluding an agreement on the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from Lebanon. He firmly believed that conclusion of an Israeli-Lebanese Agreement would promote the conclusion of a similar agreement between Damascus and Beirut. Shultz' numerous visits to Near-Eastern capitals and his mediatory efforts, despite Syria's counteraction, were not in vain. On May 17, 1983, Israel and Lebanon concluded a political agreement in terms of which, in return for the withdrawal of the Israeli troops, Lebanon agreed to put an end to the war against Israel that had been waged since 1948. Though Lebanon was not yet ready for diplomatic relations with Israel it consented to open an Israeli diplomatic mission in Beirut. Lebanon took the obligation not to allow its territory to be used for attacks on Israel. Lebanon also consented to take measures aimed at security in the South of the country.

The Syrians' attitude to the Agreement was extremely negative, and the Agreement was defined as "part of American-Zionist project to take control of the region"⁴⁶⁹. The Agreement also envisaged parallel withdrawal of the Syrian forces from Lebanon. Yet Damascus, left out of the negotiations, ignored American diplomats' advice and refused to remove its troops from Lebanon. In fact, in conditions of American military presence in Lebanon, Syria was directly involved in a conflict with the USA having refused to carry out the above-mentioned clause of the Agreement. The bilateral relations worsened day by day, especially after Damascus declared the US Ambassador Habib persona non grata.

After the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Shouf Mountains to the South of Beirut, the River Avari when the military actions between the Druzes and pro-government Christians intensified Washington demanded that Israel "postpone" the planned withdrawal of its troops from Lebanon⁴⁷⁰. When it became evident that the Druzes were defeating the Christian forces

⁴⁶⁷ Journal of Palestine Studies, Avi-Shlaim. The Impact of US Policy in Middle East. Vol. XVII, No.1, Autumn 1987, p.22

⁴⁶⁸ Weinberger, Caspar. Fighting for Peace: Seven Critical Years in the Pentagon, p.p.154-155.

⁴⁶⁹ Maoz Moshe. Asad. The Sphinx of Damascus: A Political Biography, p.169.

⁴⁷⁰ William R. Polk. The Arab World Today, p.335.

and the Lebanese army the US navy began to fire at a Druze village in the vicinity of Beirut, Souk al-Gharb, other districts under Syrian control were bombed on the pretext of "aggressive self-defence". In answer to all this Druzes bombed Beirut Airport where the American forces were deployed. The Soviet Union accused the USA and Israel of preparing "a new stage of war". The Syrian government, in its turn, warned that the intensification of the military actions could cause Syrian interference. On September 21 Reagan shifted the responsibility for aggravating the situation in Lebanon on Syria and the USSR⁴⁷¹.

Meanwhile the dissatisfaction with Reagan's policy in Lebanon and its criticism were growing particularly after the explosion of the US Navy Headquarters and the resting-place of the sailors in Beirut. Sharing the standpoint of the Department of State Reagan once more stated the determination of the USA that "terrorists cannot make the USA leave Lebanon, they cannot occupy this vital and strategically significant part of the world"⁴⁷². In December, 1983, he ordered to carry out an air-raid against the Iranian and Syrian positions in the Plain of Bekaa. As a result of the air raid the Syrian missiles hit two American bombers. A pilot was killed; the other was taken prisoner but was soon released.

It must be noted that the war resulted in Arafat's defeat and weakening which enabled H. Assad to take control of PLO. Seizing the opportunity of disagreements within PLO after the defeat they suffered in Lebanon, Damascus, incited one of the senior reputed commanders Mousa Mouragh (Aba Mousa) to rise against Arafat. The soldiers of the PLO who criticized Arafat for unawareness, sluggishness and bribery joined Syria.

When on May 7, 1983, Arafat dismissed Abu Mousa the greatest rebellion occurred inside Fath. In Jordan, on the West Bank and in the Gulf countries the Palestinians remained loyal to Arafat whereas in Lebanon Abu Mousa found serious support inside Fath. In Damascus the authorities helped the rebels occupy Fath offices while the Syrian mass media defined Arafat as an "irresponsible" and "haughty" leader⁴⁷³.

To pacify the situation Arafat arrived in Lebanon in September. During a press conference in Tripoli he said, "Assad wants my pen. He wants

⁴⁷¹ *ibid*, p.455

⁴⁷² Lou Cannon, President Reagan: The Role of a Lifetime. pp. 443-444

⁴⁷³ "Tishrin", June 25, 1983; "Al-Sawra", June 30, 1983.

to control each Palestinian decision but I am not going to give it to him". Then Arafat remarked that he would rather see Tripoli ruined than himself surrendering and he was going to act as he had done before in Amman and Beirut⁴⁷⁴. On February 3 the Fath rebels supported by the Syrian forces initiated a large-scale attack on Arafat besieging Tripoli, the last spot controlled by PLO. The Syrians bombed the city. In December 1983, Arafat had to leave Lebanon a second time together with his four-thousand detachments⁴⁷⁵. The Israeli intervention of Lebanon in 1982 gave Teheran an excellent opportunity of military interference. The Iranian military sub-unit consisting of 800-1000 relatively small "pasdarans" (revolutionary guards) crossed the territory of Syria and stopped in the Muslim Shia district of Baalbek and the Plain of Bekaa.

By 1982 Assad's attitude to the military presence of Iran in Lebanon had been negative. But the Israeli intervention, the aggravated political situation inside Syria, particularly the events in Hama, demonstrated the strategic significance of cooperating with Iran, especially after supplanting PLO from Lebanon. Damascus was not going to miss the opportunity of strengthening its control over Lebanon and using its territory for attacks on Israel. Allowing the Iranian groups to enter Lebanon Syria skillfully used them as a trump card in the relations with the USA, particularly in matters connected with hostages. And it is not at all accidental that since 1982 the issues of terrorism and hostages have occupied a significant place in the Syrian-American relations.

Thus in 1982, a group, separated from Amal⁴⁷⁶ and headed by Hussein Mousavi, kidnapped David Dodge, President of the American University in Beirut. He was first kept in Bekaa, then was taken to Iran. Only a year later due to Syria's mediation was Dodge released while Syria was

⁴⁷⁴ Rubin, Barry, *The Truth about Syria*, p. 89

⁴⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p.89

⁴⁷⁶ The Amal movement of the Lebanon Shiites was founded by imam Mousa al-Sadr in 1974. The movement together with the PLO and Druza was included in the Muslim left forces. The Lebanese Shiites' pro-Syrian standpoint was more vividly revealed after 1975 when the faith in the PLO decreased and the ties between the latter and the revolutionary Iranian movement grew closer.

The gradual increase of the controversies between the PLO and Lebanese Shiites gave rise to pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian groups inside the Shiite community. In September 1984 the pro-Iranian Hezbollah appeared and this fact directly contradicted the interests Damascus pursued in Lebanon.

thanked by Dodge and the Americans. Later numerous cases of kidnapping occurred in a similar manner, which, definitely, served Syria's interests to maintain the relations with the USA and impose pressure on it. In February, 1984, when Amal militia, patronized by the Syrians, occupied West Beirut the Syrians made steps aimed at releasing Americans held hostages by other groups. In 1985 Syria deserved official Washington's words of gratitude for releasing American TV journalist Jeremy Levin. It must be mentioned that the United States made some attempts at releasing the hostages but all of them failed. According to the conclusion of the CIA and the Senate Intelligence Commission the USA had "neither appropriate preparedness nor qualities" to realize such missions⁴⁷⁷. The terrorist acts played a significant role in the withdrawal of the American forces from Lebanon. The murder of Malcolm Kerr, an outstanding scientist and expert at the Arab world, on January 18, 1984, was another warning that no American could feel safe in Lebanon. Meanwhile opposition inside the USA grew, the Lebanese army went on falling apart and the government of Gemayel was overthrown. All this left no alternative for Reagan but to order the American Navy to leave Beirut on February 7, 1984. The Americans' indignation and feeling of powerlessness was so great that the American submarine "New Jersey" fired 250 missiles at the positions of the pro-Syrian Mohammedan militia near Beirut. On February 26 the American military personnel eventually left Lebanon. Historians and political scientists have referred to the failure of the American policy in Lebanon a number of times. But very few of them have mentioned the fact that the major reason for the fruitlessness of the American policy was not only the absence of deep and all-sided analysis of the actual motives and internal causes or the dissensions inside Reagan's administration, **but also the fact of overlooking or underestimating Syrian's role in the course of the crisis.** Although US Secretary of State Shultz strove "to influence Assad, though indirectly, with the help of other Arab countries" he was sure that the reason for the Americans' failure in Lebanon was not the absence of attention to Syria but the inability to support diplomacy by military force⁴⁷⁸. From this viewpoint Shultz shifted the blame on to Weinberger who "refused to use force"⁴⁷⁹. It is hard to answer the question

⁴⁷⁷ "Washington Post", May 12, 1985

⁴⁷⁸ Shultz, George. *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State*, p. 233

⁴⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p.234

how any policy could operate in Lebanon without cooperating with Assad. Lebanon was too important for Assad to agree to withdraw the Syrian troops from there; in particular, at a time when he was able, at the least cost, to deliver a blow to the Israeli and Western Multi-National Forces deployed in Lebanon by using the Palestinians and other forces. Leaving Syria out of the process of negotiations the USA all the more facilitated Assad's task – not to compromise on any issue concerning Lebanon. During the Lebanese war Washington's close strategic cooperation with Israel and the extreme anti-Syrian policy it pursued yielded the opposite result. The American viewpoint, according to which the front formed by the USSR, Syria, PLO, Druzes and Shiites was to be opposed by the alliance of the USA, Israel and Maronites, was superficial, since the incompatibility of the interests between the groups was not taken into serious consideration. Binding the conclusion of the Agreement of May 17 the United States indirectly promoted Gemayel's isolation and weakening, simultaneously strengthening his opponents-Druzes and Shias. Undertaking military actions against the latter Washington all the more made them depend on Damascus and thus helped Assad confirm himself as the sole real leader of the Lebanese policy.

Taif Agreement and the Establishment of Pax Syriaana in Lebanon

The policy pursued by the USA in Lebanon caused dissatisfaction and frustration even in the White House. During Reagan's second term of presidency the main concern of the American administration was the abrupt increase of terrorism in the region as well as the expansion of Iran-Iraqi war. US Secretary of State Shultz made a speech at the annual political conference of the American-Israeli Public Problems Committee on April 21, 1985, in which he singled out the following six key postulates of the American policy in the Middle East:

- The USA shall continue its efforts to establish firm and lasting peace, which will take the just demands of all the sides into account;
- The USA rejects any violent and abrupt change of peace and security; the USA shall counteract those governments and organizations that strive to do away with Israel and the friendly Arab countries in the region;

- The US policy towards PLO remains unchanged; Washington shall never recognize it and shall never negotiate with a group which supports forcible solutions and does not consent to UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and Israel's right to exist;
- The only way to real, lasting peace between the Arabs and Israel is direct negotiations. There can be no other way. We do not see the necessity of any other program. There exists only one way – to negotiate round the table, tête-à-tête;
- The USA shall continue supporting the Palestinians' lawful demands by means of peaceful negotiations; Yet Washington shall not support creation of a Palestinian independent state on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, it shall not support the annexation of those areas nor Israel's constant control over them neither.
- The USA re-affirms Israel's right to peaceful existence within inviolable and recognised borders. As Reagan said in September 1, 1982, "In terms of Israel's borders existing by 1967 the narrowest part of the country had been 10 miles wide. The majority of Israel's population had lived in an area accessible for the hostile Arab artillery. I cannot demand that Israel again live in that way"⁴⁸⁰. The United States shall continue sharing this conviction.

Meanwhile serious changes were under way in the Soviet Union where elderly General Secretaries of the Communist Party followed one another. At last, in 1984, relatively young Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the party. The reforms going on in the Soviet Union—"perestrojka" and "glasnost" could not help influencing the country's foreign policy.

The international atmosphere was altering; the USSR-USA dialogue was obtaining a different, unprecedented shade. Facing enormous economic problems and having disgracefully failed in the war against Afghanistan, the superpower was no longer able to keep pace with the arms race compelled by the West. The USA was actively filling in the vacuum, formed by the USSR's weakening in the international sphere, and was gaining a leading role in solving major international problems, especially the most lasting and key problem, the Arab-Israeli conflict. Moscow was no longer able to render

⁴⁸⁰ Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. XIV, No. 4, summer 1985, p. 126

large-scale "free" assistance to the "client" countries all over the world, Syria included. The USSR's new approaches to the format and bulk of foreign assistance gave rise to serious problems for Damascus where military and economic priority demands had been met by Moscow. In mid 1980-s H. Assad began to seek the expand Syria's cooperation with the USA and look for other ways of compensating for the loss of Syria's "patron", the Soviet Union. That is the reason why the Syrian-American relations occupied a central position on the political agenda of Damascus' foreign policy concerning especially the problems of peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the solution of the Lebanese issue, terrorism, illegal drug trade, human rights. In the peacemaking process the USA continued to attach importance to Jordan's participation on behalf of the Palestinians and strove to establish peace between Jordan and Israel for which there seemed to be favourable conditions because the Arab national-liberation struggle was obviously declining. The Arab world was overwhelmed with chaos, sentiments of fruitlessness and senselessness of struggling against Israel, of political vagueness and de-ideologization⁴⁸¹. The relations between Syria and PLO were extremely strained, especially after the riot incited by the Syrians against Y. Arafat. In February, 1985, to maintain his political vitality, Arafat had to conclude an agreement with Jordan.

The Syrian official daily "Tishrin" defined the above-said agreement as "violation of the decisions of the Palestinian National Council, betrayal of the Palestinian and Arab struggle"⁴⁸². Damascus bent over backwards not to allow conclusion of a new Jordan-Israeli agreement and supported the idea of holding an international summit meeting which was going to exclude any possibility for Israel to negotiate with each Arab country separately. Damascus avoided immediate clash with Israel and went on strengthening its economic and military potential waiting for convenient opportunity to negotiate from the position of force. It is to the point to remark that, unlike Jordan, Syria did not have to hurry. First of all, if Syria had joined Jordan and PLO in the peacemaking process, it would have weakened the West front against Israel and made its internal policy vulnerable concerning Lebanon. Assad would not adopt a conciliatory policy. He firmly believed Syria to be

⁴⁸¹ Пырлин Е. Д. Некоторые особенности современного этапа развития арабского национально-освободительного движения. – "Проблемы современной арабистики", с. 67

⁴⁸² "Tishrin", February 13, 1995

the leader of settling Palestine problem and he was proud that, in comparison with other Arab countries he had done the utmost in Lebanon against Israel. From the internal political viewpoint Damascus "could not bring itself to negotiate with Israel"⁴⁸³. Second, Syria could not make peace without regaining the Golans, and this was quite a lawful demand from the viewpoint of international law. The annexation of the Golans did not pose such a demographic threat to Syria as to Jordan, in case the Palestinians were displaced from the West Bank. Third, from the regional viewpoint Assad was not interested in such a settlement which solved the problem of the West Bank and the Golans leaving out the problem of the Palestinians' presence in Lebanon, something posing constant danger.

Gorbachev's "perestrojka" gave birth to serious problems, not only economic but political as well. In April, 1987, at the meeting with Assad in Moscow Gorbachev refused to deliver the arms requested by the former and warned Assad that the conflict with Israel was to be settled politically and that the USSR was going to restore the diplomatic relations with Israel⁴⁸⁴. Assad had to consent to a joint declaration on establishing peace in the Middle East by holding an international summit under the aegis of the UNO⁴⁸⁵. Assad was sure that under the circumstances Syria would win nothing from peaceful negotiations. He thought that Washington had demonstrated its inability or rather unwillingness to impose pressure on Israel, moreover Washington did everything to strengthen its only ally in the Near East.

Unlike the Americans, Assad did not want to witness Hussein and Arafat's deal with Israel concerning the West Bank and Gaza. So it was definite that Assad was not going to consent to an international summit under the aegis of the USA, as R. Murphy said, "It is impossible to threaten or flatter Syria. Syria will never give up its standpoint of principle to liberate the occupied Arab lands and to restore the Arabs' trampled rights. Syria will never be involved in a game, which will, in any way, strengthen Israel and weaken the positions of the Arab world in the negotiations. Striving for real, just peace Syria has always believed that it is possible to establish peace only

⁴⁸³ Kent, Jay "The Assad Factor". The Middle East, January 1986, p.47

⁴⁸⁴ Karsh, Efraim. Soviet Policy towards Syria since 1970, pp. 58-59, 163-177, Golan, Galia. Gorbachev's Middle East Strategy. Ed. George W. Breslauer, pp. 157-158

⁴⁸⁵ Summary of World Broadcast. Part 1, SU/8553 A4/1, 28 April 1987.

by an international summit held by the UNO⁴⁸⁶. Israel's opposition to the Palestinians' participation, as well as Jordan's refusal to negotiate without the Palestinians' and the Arab world's approval, brought this new American peace initiative to deadlock.

The beginning of the Palestinian "intifada" (rebellion) in Gaza and on the West Bank compelled the USA to look for new ways of solution to the problem. In February 1988, Shultz came up with a new initiative proposing immediate beginning of negotiations on creating Palestinian self-rule on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, as well as on holding elections of local self-governing bodies in January, 1989. At the same time Shultz suggested beginning negotiations on the problem of the occupied areas. Israel's Prime Minister Shamir turned down the American proposal noting "it is inadmissible to yield the areas in return for peace". Israel's Minister of Defence Rabin stated that "he cannot regard Assad as a partner in the peacemaking process and that is why he considers the principle of "peace for areas" senseless"⁴⁸⁷. Assad, in his turn, criticized Shultz' initiative calling it "capitulation, having no connection with just settlement and supporting Israel's interests"⁴⁸⁸. Assad demanded the immediate return of the Golans before starting the negotiations.

In general, since mid 1970-s Syria had preferred political and diplomatic ways of solving problems with Israel. This tendency grew more noticeable in Syria's foreign policy in 1988. Considering the difficulties which obstructed establishing strategic balance, Syria's obvious, isolation in the region after the Iranian-Iraqi war, the economic crisis inside the country, global changes connected with the collapse of the USSR, Damascus, naturally, was to seek ways and means to strengthen its economic and regional positions as well as to settle the confrontation with Israel with American and Arab assistance.

As an initial step, Damascus was gradually and cautiously paving the way to Washington and Cairo. Syrian mass media, on the one hand, criticized Shultz' initiative, on the other hand, noted, "If Shultz wants just peace, the door is known, and he can freely enter"⁴⁸⁹. At the end of February, then in April and June, 1988, Shultz met Assad and other Syrian top officials

⁴⁸⁶ US News and World Report, 01.02.1986.

⁴⁸⁷ "Haaretz", 08.06.1988

⁴⁸⁸ , march 10, 21 and 29, 1988

⁴⁸⁹ , 06.04.1988.

in Damascus. Although at the beginning of February meeting Senator Arlen Specter, Assad had said that he was ready to negotiate with Israel on the return of the Golans without connecting it with Palestine problem, at the meeting with Shultz he once again stressed that Syria was interested in "just and overall settlement" but not in "intermediate" or "partial" solutions⁴⁹⁰. So the negotiating parties were unable to arrive at an agreement. The main reason for it was, in our opinion, not the mutually exclusive and unyielding standpoints of Washington and Damascus, but the fact that Shultz "was more interested in the Palestinians than in the Syrians"⁴⁹¹.

In 1989 Moscow's deliveries of arms to Syria decreased by 500 per cent. Though in 1988-1989 the Soviet Union still continued to realize the economic projects in Syria (construction of the harbour in the town of Tartus, etc.) and did not reduce the number of military advisers (about 2500) it kept on emphasizing the importance of political settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict excluding any "military version". The Kuwait daily "Al-Kabas" wrote that appointing Alexander Zotov USSR Ambassador to Syria Moscow dropped a broad hint that "Damascus was to give up the military version of struggle against Israel" since, according to the daily, Zotov "had played an important role in improving the Soviet-Israeli relations and he had also been entrusted with the Soviet Jews' problems by the Communist Party"⁴⁹².

The collapse of the communist system in Eastern Europe, in its turn, had negatively affected Syria's foreign policy. The East-European countries not only refused to continue their assistance to Syria but also, as Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs Moshe Arens put it, they "were standing in a queue" to renew their relations with Israel.

Realizing that the situation might change for the worse Assad made some compromising steps to extenuate the West's attitude towards Syria. In 1989 some top officials agreed, for the first time, to meet the representatives of the "Amnesty International", the banished Syrians were allowed to return to the country, in the outcome of the Parliamentary elections on May 22, 1990 the number of independent members increased from 18 per cent to one third of the Parliament, a few Syrian Jewish women were let out of prison, the diplomatic relations with Great Britain were restored, terrorist acts against

⁴⁹⁰ "Haaretz", 07.02.1988. US News and World Report, 14.03.1988, p.14

⁴⁹¹ Shultz, George. Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State, p.229.

"Haaretz", 25.02.1988, "Maariv" 26.02.1988

⁴⁹² "Al-Quds", 27.01.1989

Western missions were prohibited. Regarding the Soviet Union as a strategic ally, Damascus was more and more biasing towards Washington, especially after George Bush was elected US President.

As for Lebanon, Syria's priority was to maintain law and order there, having successfully completed the withdrawal of the foreign forces with the exception of limited Israeli forces "in the security zone". On December 28, 1985, Damascus initiated a tripartite agreement among three leaders – Shiite Nabih Beri, Druze Walid Jumblatt and Maronite Elie Hobeika, but Syria's initiative failed. In 1986-1987 Syria's relations with Hezbollah grew worse while Iran's interference in Lebanon's internal affairs worsened Syria's relations with Teheran. In 1985-1986 the clashes along the Syrian-Israeli border, particularly those in the air above the Plain of Bekaa in Lebanon controlled by the Syrians grew frequent. On November 15, 1985, Israel hit two Syrian Mig-23 planes over the Lebanese territory. In answer to this Damascus deployed anti-aircraft missiles in Bekaa. Only after the American diplomatic mediation did Damascus withdraw the missiles from Bekaa but not from the Lebanese frontier areas, which enabled the Syrians take control of the Lebanese air area and put on end to the Israeli intelligence flights.

The situation in Lebanon was aggravated because of Prime Minister Rashid Karami's assassination in 1987, and later, in September 1988, President Amin Gemayel's term of office was over causing a constitutional crisis. According to the constitution Gemayel could not be re-elected so he appointed the candidate for presidency General Michael Aoun Deputy Prime Minister. This resulted in dual power with Michael Aoun, on the one hand, and Selim al-Hoss, on the other hand. The latter had replaced Karami.

Thus two rival governments destabilized the situation, and Syria got seriously concerned about it, especially when General Aoun initiated an unsuccessful "liberation struggle" against the Syrian presence in Lebanon.

One of Shultz' colleagues said that "The defeat of the USA in Lebanon had deeply upset" the State Secretary. It is necessary that among the reasons for the defeat American politicians and mass media mentioned Assad's "rigid regime"⁴⁹³ as the major obstacle on the way of implementing the American policy in Lebanon. Thus Washington gradually realized that the

⁴⁹³ Dickey, Christopher. *Assad and his Allies: Irreconcilable Differences foreign Affairs*. Vol. 66, N1, 1987, p. 61

American policy in Lebanon had to take into consideration the Syrian factor. Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sharaa said, "The US administration had admitted the error of the American policy in Lebanon and has recognized Syria's key role in that region"⁴⁹⁴.

To overcome the Lebanese crisis Americans started talks with Syrians. Thus, on April 4, and September 14, 1988, US State Secretary's Adviser Richard Murphy was in Damascus and discussed the situation in Lebanon with the Syrians. The parties came to an agreement on some problems of principle, such as the necessity of concluding an agreement that would take the interests of all the sides into consideration, inadmissibility of Lebanon's division, priority of holding presidential elections in Lebanon⁴⁹⁵. It must be admitted that Syrian-American cooperation played an extremely important role in establishing peace in Lebanon. Due to this cooperation as well as the Saudi "blessing" the conclusion of Taif Agreement became possible in October 1989. The Agreement consisted of four parts. The first part referred to political reforms, the second re-affirmed Lebanese statehood in Lebanon's territory, the third referred to the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from Southern Lebanon, the fourth dwelled on establishing "special" relations with Syria. Hence we can state the Agreement put an end to the military conflict in Lebanon and established special relations between Syria and Lebanon, relations covering all the spheres (fi shata al majalat) such as foreign policy, security, defence, economy, education information.

In terms of the Agreement they formed Supreme Council consisting of the President of each country and three officials. The Agreement also confirmed Lebanon's formal request to leave the Syrian military units there on certain conditions⁴⁹⁶. With regard to this Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Farouk Al-Sharaa stated, "The majority of the Lebanese and Syrians would approve of unification of our two countries", at the same time he added that his government did not have such an intention.

Taif Agreement did not please all the sides involved in the Lebanese conflict, nevertheless from the legal viewpoint it made the establishment of Pax Syriana possible in Lebanon. The control over the latter enabled Assad to open a new military front against Israel, which, in its turn, was an

⁴⁹⁴ "Al-Hawadis", October 14, 1984

⁴⁹⁵ Foreign Broadcasting Information Service. December 30, 1988

⁴⁹⁶ Pipes Daniel, *Damascus Courts the West: Syrian Politics, 1989-1991*. Washington Institute for Near East Policy, p.71

exceptionally important trump card and an efficient means of handling the dangerously strained situation in the region for Assad.

One of the reports on Lebanon stated, Syria "issues orders, appoints top officials, holds parliamentary and other elections, puts forward or dismisses anyone, interferes in Lebanon's administrative, legal, economic and especially political matters"⁴⁹⁷. Damascus' control over Lebanon from then on became complete.

It must be noted that in 1990 the Christian nationalist forces led by Michael Aoun objected to concluding Taif Agreement, which, though "temporarily", prolonged and legalized the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Aoun attempted to rebel and fight against the pro-Syrian Lebanese government. The latter asked the Syrian army for help. As a result, in 1991, all the "militias" were disarmed with the exception of "Hezbollah" which was supported by Damascus. In the same year, on May 20, Lebanon and Syria concluded an Agreement on "Friendship, Cooperation and Coordination" which once and for all, legalized the Syrian control.

However Taif Agreement was based on compromise while its pivotal provision according to which Christians and Muslims got equal representation in the Parliament⁴⁹⁸ was of "cornerstone significance" not only in reconciling the conflicting sides but also for Lebanon's future.

"The Christians (Maronites) gave up their monopoly lasting for about 65 years, and the Muslims though forming the majority of the population, did not insist upon having majority in the Parliament"⁴⁹⁹.

For the first time the religious-communal nature of Lebanon's government was reviewed paving the way to final abolition of the provision that weakened the statehood of the country.

The historic significance of Taif Agreement was that it officially put an end to the 15-year civil war.

⁴⁹⁷ Rubin, Barry. The Truth about Syria, p.121

⁴⁹⁸ The Armenian community was given two ministerial portfolios in Lebanon's government.

⁴⁹⁹ Հովհաննիսյան Ն., Արաբական երկրների Պատմություն, հ. 3, էջ 658-659, Hovhannisyann. Nikolay. The History of the Arab Countries, vol.3, pp.658-659.

Problems of Terrorism, Drug Trade and Human Rights in US-Syrian Relations

One of the major reasons for worsening of the USA-Syrian relations became Syria's "support to terrorism". At the initial stage the cases of seizing hostages by Palestinian and other groups, financed by Iran, in Lebanon were mainly used by Damascus to improve its relations with the USA.

But later growing dissensions and controversies between the Iranian groups and Damascus eventually deprived the latter of the last practical opportunity. The increase in and frequency of the acts of seizing hostages finally outgrew Syria's control thus doing it more harm than good.

In June, 1985, the Islamic organization "Jihad" seized six hostages: a journalist, Manager of Beirut American University Hospital, an academician, two clergymen and William Buckley, Head of the CIA Agency in Lebanon. Assad attempted to interfere but failed. On June 14 a Shia group hijacked a plane of TWA flight 847 seizing 40 hostages one of whom, an American, was killed later. Here again Assad failed, and though his spokesman stated that all the hostages would be released "the extremists put forward new demands. A day later the hostages with the exception of six Americans and four Frenchman⁵⁰⁰ were set free. In November 1986, the Islamic Jihad released David Jacobson, Manager of Beirut American University Hospital, and organized his return in a way that Assad was unable to benefit from it. Nevertheless Damascus kept assuring Washington that they would do their best to free the American hostages in Lebanon. Yet the representatives of the American administration were gradually losing their faith in Assad and were trying to find other ways of concluding a deal with Teheran. Though the US official circle, denied their contracts and any agreement with Iran there are some data that Washington agreed to deliver Iran some kinds of ammunition in return for the American hostages' release⁵⁰¹. One of the top officials of Reagan's administration testified that Washington had sent a letter by a third party to Iran which read that no person had been authorized to negotiate on behalf of the United States in

⁵⁰⁰ Shultz' viewpoint that Assad interfered only for the reason that he feared the American military blow does not correspond to reality.

⁵⁰¹ Shultz, George. Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State, pp. 665-668

Lebanon concerning the hostages' release⁵⁰².

Damascus was gradually losing an extremely important lever in the relations with the USA and became the target of the American administration's accusations and practically punitive measures. It must be mentioned that the Syrian side has denied its participation in terrorist acts for a number of times and has sent numerous messages concerning this issue to Washington⁵⁰³. At the end of 1985, as a result of the terrorist acts at Vienna and Rome airports, twenty people were killed, 5 Americans included. In April 1986, a great number of Americans were killed in the explosion of a nightclub in Berlin. Struggle against terrorism enjoying state patronage became a priority for the American administration, which resulted in bombing Libya in April, 1986. On April 24 Reagan declared that he did not exclude bombing Syria and Iran. A day later State Secretary Shultz denied the existence of any concrete plan of bombing Syria or Iran not excluding the use of military force against the countries having any connection with terrorism⁵⁰⁴. Damascus criticized Libya's bombing and Reagan's "hostile declarations". It was particularly noted that the American acts "froze" Arab-American cooperation in various fields including the process of releasing the American hostages in Lebanon⁵⁰⁵.

The United States was concerned about the activity of Abu Nidal's⁵⁰⁶ terrorist group, in particular, the fact that the office of the latter was in Damascus. In October, when a citizen of Jordan was arrested for an attempt to blow up an Israeli plane in London who admitted that had contacts with the Syrian Intelligence Service, the USA, following Great Britain's example recalled its Ambassador from Damascus⁵⁰⁷.

The USA took new punitive measures against Syria which involved ban on the delivery of up-to-date equipment and financing of the export to Syria by the Import-Export Bank, the annulment of the Syrian-American Agreement on Air Communications as well as pressure on the American oil companies aiming at limitation of their activity in Syria. Washington also

reduced the staff of the American Embassy in Damascus.

US Secretary of State Whitehead made a speech at the Brookings Institution in which he stated, "Abu-Nidal's terrorist group is considered to be the most dangerous one and enjoys Syria's open support. Particularly, Damascus allows the training of the above-mentioned group in the Palestinian camps, permits their unimpeded movement from place to place in the Syrian territory, provides them with necessary documents, etc. Besides Abu-Nidal's group, Damascus supports other extremist Palestinian, Kurdish (Kurdistan's Labour Party), Japanese (Red Army), Armenian (ASALA) and Pakistani (Al-Zoulfikar) groups"⁵⁰⁸.

As we have already mentioned, in 1979 Syria was included by the Department of State in the list of the countries supporting terrorism, so the export of 7 billion worth of technical equipment and goods to that country was banned. Additional limitations and means of control were imposed on the goods delivered to Syria in 1986. According to article 6i of the Protocol of Controlling Export of 1979 the total amount of exported goods to Syria was reduced to \$1 million⁵⁰⁹. In 1986 the US Congress adopted General Protocol (P. L. 99-399) on Diplomatic Security and Anti-Terrorism in which in terms of item 509 any kind of arms delivery to the countries supporting terrorism, Syria included, was prohibited⁵¹⁰.

After Syria had made great efforts in releasing Charles Glass, an American journalist, seized hostage in Lebanon, and Abu Nidal's office had been closed in Damascus Syrian-American relations grew warm to some extent. On June 25 US President Reagan sent a personal letter to Assad, and on July 26 American envoy Vernon Walters visited Damascus.

During the visit Walters and Assad discussed a number of problems concerning Syrian-American relations and terrorism. On August 18 Charles Glass emerged in Beirut who was later handed to the US Embassy in Damascus by Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Farouk al-Sharaa. Though

⁵⁰² New York Times", 08.10.1988"

⁵⁰³ "Washington Post", 01.07.1986

⁵⁰⁴ "New York Times", 24, 25 April, 1986

⁵⁰⁵ "Washington Post", 18.05.1986

⁵⁰⁶ Abu Nidal (Sabzi al-Banna, 1937-2002) was the leader of the organization "Faith Revolutionary Command" which later joined the opposition of Y. Arafat PLJF.

⁵⁰⁷ Dickey, Christopher. Assad and his Allies: Irreconcilable Differences foreign Affairs. Vol. 66, N1, 1987, p. 59

⁵⁰⁸ Journal of Palestine Studies, Vol. XVII, No.3, Spring 1987, p. 216

⁵⁰⁹ Congressional Research Service. The Library of Congress. Syrian-US Relations. By Alfred B. Prados. Foreign Affairs and National Defence Division. May 3, 1995, p.11

⁵¹⁰ In 1987 the Declaration published by the American. Israel Public Affairs Committee (ALPAC) appealed to the US President to suspend all kinds of commercial ties with Syrian and reduce the staffs of the American Embassy in Damascus and Syrian Embassy in Washington.

Glass insisted that he had run away official Damascus hastened to assign the fact of his release to themselves. Anyway on September 2 US Ambassador William Eagleton returned to Damascus, and a week later Washington informed the American oil companies that they could again cooperate with Syria. If Washington accused Damascus of "terrorism", then Damascus has not, so far, considered its support to the Palestinians' struggle to be terrorism. It is to the point to note that the problem of international legal definition of terrorism is a vital, burning issue. Thus far, despite the work carried on by a special UN "group of wisemen" there has been no common opinion concerning the concept of "terrorism". It is a paradox but such is the state of things. The international community must define "terrorism" the way it was done in 1944 when the term "genocide" was defined. It must state that purposeful use of force against peaceful population and killing them irrespective of the motives is terrorism. People who identify national-liberation struggle with terrorism should realize that no goal or noble idea can cause the death of unarmed and peaceful people. Terrorism and terrorists must be condemned anywhere and any time. As we will see Assad turned to this up-to-date, urgent legal-political problem shedding terrorist goals and acts everywhere.

On June 16, 1998, in an interview to the French channel TV-1 Syria's leader said the following with respect to terrorism and the activity of the Palestinian groups; "We have lived with accusations of terrorism for a long time. That improper topic does not touch us. No one can produce any evidence to prove that there exists terrorism in Syria. What is spoken about is not terrorism. They call terrorism those people who defend their homes, their land, their homeland. They do not charge us with terrorism directly but they state that we patronize terrorism since we allow thousands of Palestinians to live beside us and enjoy the same rights alongside with Syrian citizens.

Actually the Palestinians displaced from their homes and accused of terrorism, live in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and maybe elsewhere. To those who complain about the assistance we render to the Palestinians we say, return their homes to them.

Anyway, for more than ten years Palestinians have not carried out any violence from the Syrian territory. I would like to remind that back in 1985 I proposed holding an international conference, which would clearly define terrorism and differentiate between terrorism and self-defence. All the articles of civil law, all the documents and UN resolutions affirm the right to

self-defence"⁵¹¹.

During this interview Assad mentioned the well-known incident that occurred at Madrid Conference. When Israel's Prime Minister I. Shamir accused Syria of terrorism the Syrian Minister of Foreign Affairs showed all those present I. Shamir's large photo which had been circulated by the British Mandate authorities in search of Shamir as a terrorist. Then Assad added, "This incident caused an argument among the Israelites themselves, as they considered it shameful that Shamir, accusing others of terrorism, had been a terrorist himself, moreover, had become Head of the Israeli Government".

According to US Congress and Department of State Syria had been a transit country for drugs. The flow of narcotics (hashish and heroin) was carried on from the Plain of Bekaa in Lebanon through Syria to Europe and the United States. An alternative way of narcotraffic (opium, morphine and other psychotropic drugs) passes from Turkey through Syria towards the Near-Eastern and Gulf countries. Despite the fact that Syria signed the International Agreement on Narcotics in 1961 and, in 1972, the Protocol attached to it as well as the Agreement on Psychotropic Drugs in 1971 and acceded to the UN Agreement on Narcotics in 1988, Syria has been mentioned in the US Presidential Report, since 1987 as a country that "does not make sufficient efforts aimed at controlling the production of narcotics and stopping the narco-flow through its territory"⁵¹². It must be noted that Washington was concerned about this problem mainly because a certain amount of those narcotics reached the United States from Syria. To put it in a nutshell, the problem of drugs added further complication to the extremely strained bilateral relations between the USA and Syria. It must be noted that there are other transit countries besides Syria in the Near East. Considering it inappropriate to go into details concerning this problem we think it to the point to ascertain that Syria has never been a drug-producing country or an international "money-laundering" centre. This problem was abused by the USA rather for political than practical scruples.

Besides the accusations of supporting terrorism Washington had one more convenient means to bring pressure on Syria and it was the issue of human rights in Syria.

⁵¹¹ Мир глазами президента Сирии Хафез Асада, с. 201-214. World by the eyes of Assad. pp.201-214. Speeches and interviews of Assad in Russian.

⁵¹² Congressional Research Service. The Library of Congress. Syrian-US Relations. By Alfred B. Prados. Foreign Affairs and National Defence Division. May 3, 1995, p.7

Generally the problems of human rights and establishing democracy are the most serious and major levers of the US administration in the relations with the countries of the third world. In the US foreign policy they have become something, which "socialism" and its export to different parts of the world used to be for Moscow. Today under the banner of protecting human rights and establishing democracy Washington pursues its own geopolitical "vital" interests. If the authorities of any country are not sufficiently pro-American, Washington energetically applies the whole arsenal of its punitive measures. If the administration of any country is rather pro-American, then Washington is quite tolerant in the face of the disgraceful state of things in connection with human rights.

We do not tend at all to idealize the degree of democracy or human rights protection in all the countries of the Near East. The countries in this region are far from the Western criteria of democracy, so far as the inhabitants of a besieged town are from the luxury of going to the opera. Compulsion and punitive measures cannot be efficient means in Arab monarchies and other Arab countries to expedite the process of democratization. Just the other way about – the pressure of the USA and the West can result in unexpected and undesirable outcomes, first of all, for the West itself. Underestimation of the factor of Islamic extremism in almost all the Arab countries can bring about unpredictable consequences, seizure of power by Islamists in perspective. This was proved first in Algeria at the end of 1990-s with the war declared by the radicals, in Palestine in 2006 by the victory of "Hamas" and split of power. Though the organization "Muslim Brothers" (Ikhvan al-Muslimin) is prohibited in Egypt, it extends its influence in the country. A similar situation can be observed in Morocco.

In Arab countries the popularity of various organizations based on religious warp poses a serious threat to the secular administrations of almost all the countries. In case real democracy is established, the Arab countries will turn into Islamic states, Iran's example testifies to this. That is the reason why those countries try hard to suspend the process of democratization and reforms. While encouraging the afore-mentioned process in Arab countries the West should consider the traditions, the history of the development of political culture, the internal situation and peculiarities of each country separately. And last but not least, the citizens of those countries themselves must be interested in creating democratic society, and not the neighboring countries or superpowers.

As for Syria, martial law has been in force there since 1963 with the exception of a short period of 1973-1974. The US State Department has mentioned a number of times "unlawful arrests and sentences of imprisonment without preliminary investigation, violation of freedom of speech, press unions, etc"⁵¹³.

A case of serious violation of human rights was recorded by the USA in 1982, after the incidents in Aleppo and Hama, when the authorities suppressed the riot instigated by "Ikhvan al-Muslimin". It is worth mentioning that Syrian officials state that owing to their quick actions they managed to prevent permeation of Muslim extremism and further acts of violence, which occur in Egypt, Algeria and other Arab countries. Syria used to deny the accusations concerning human rights assigning them to the martial law and state of being at war. Later, to please the West and the USA and to settle the relations with them, Syria declared Amnesty for political prisoners and improved the state of the Jews in the country. This last problem will be enlarged upon later.

⁵¹³ Congressional Research Service. The Library of Congress. Syrian-US Relations. By Alfred B. Prados. Foreign Affairs and National Defence Division. May 3, 1995, p.8

Chapter 5 – Syria an Active Participant in the Peace Process (1991–2000)

Syria's Participation in the Gulf War

As we have already mentioned, since 1988 Damascus had been cautiously looking for ways of rapprochement with the United States. Considering the fact that in 1969 George Bush was elected US President without “the Jewish voters” support the Syrians hoped that the USA “as a superpower responsible for international security and peace would abandon Zionist mentality, do away with Zionist danger, compel the Zionist enemy to withdraw the troops from the occupied areas and carry out the international decisions aimed at establishing just and overall peace in the region”⁵¹⁴. Bush and Secretary of State Baker criticized the policy pursued by Israel in the occupied Arab areas demanding that Israel settle the Arab-Israeli conflict in terms of UNO Resolution 242 and 338 within the framework of “peace in return for the occupied areas”. Moreover the United States assured Syria of the intention to reach overall peace on all the fronts, the Golan included. As US Ambassador to Damascus E. Djerejian put it, Washington “had stepped on a new phase of cooperation with Syria”⁵¹⁵.

Syria, demonstrating a more flexible standpoint, declared its support to the afore-mentioned resolutions in 1989 and began to make gradual steps towards rapprochement with Egypt. In December, 1988, after ten-year anti-Egyptian propaganda Assad publicly declared he “admits Egypt’s importance on the Arab stage” and “Syrian-Egyptian cooperation has always met the common interests of the Arab world”⁵¹⁶. In May, 1989, Syria no longer objected to Egypt’s re-affiliation to the Arab League. In December 1989 the flights between Cairo and Damascus were resumed and a fortnight later their diplomatic relations were restored. In July, 1990, after a thirteen-year interval Assad paid an official visit to Egypt and before leaving Cairo he stated, “We

⁵¹⁴ “Tishrin”, 21.01.1989

⁵¹⁵ “Yedioth Ahronot” 23.05.1989

⁵¹⁶ “Tishrin”, 09.02 and 16.05.1989

are ready to join in the peacemaking process, we recognize UNO Resolutions 242 and 338 and we call for just and overall peace”⁵¹⁷.

The afore-mentioned basic alteration in Syria’s foreign policy, being the result of the end of cold war, aimed not only at improving the country’s regional positions but also forming a common front with Egypt (as well as with Saudi Arabia and Jordan) in order to counteract Israel’s declinatory posture and its intention of concluding a separate deal with the Palestinians and Jordan. That is the reason why Damascus continually stated its willingness of settling the Arab-Israeli conflict peacefully. At the beginning 1990 Assad passed his consent to negotiations with Israel on certain terms to the US President. Damascus’ statements were mainly addressed to Bush administration as the only power able to persuade Israel to negotiate on all-embracing settlement, withdraw the troops from the Golan, and, assisting Syria economically, leave it out of the list of the countries supporting terrorism. Within this context it is worth mentioning Syria’s Vice Prime Minister Abd al-Halim Khaddam’s request to meet “progressive Jews” at the coming meeting in New York during his visit to the USA in November, 1989. According to the “Jerusalem Post” the Jews declined the request for the reason that they did not want “to interfere in Near-Eastern diplomacy”⁵¹⁸.

Global and regional changes had much graver consequences for Syria than for Israel. The Soviet military, political and diplomatic assistance to Syria decreased whereas international patronage of Israel not only continued but increased as well. At the beginning of 1990-s Israel’s strategic positions were much stronger than those of Syria. To quit the state of things in the Syrian-American relations and to achieve “détente” Assad unexpectedly got the indirect help of a person who had been his opponent for years – Saddam Hussein. On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait⁵¹⁹. After

⁵¹⁷ Ibid, 1989, 12.12 and 17.12

⁵¹⁸ “Jerusalem Post”, November, 1, 1989

⁵¹⁹ About the Gulf war see Freedman, Lawrence and Karsh, Efraim. *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991 Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*. Princeton University Press, 1993; Marcia Lynn Whicker, James P. Pfiffner, and Raymond A. Moore, ed., *The Presidency and the Persian Gulf war*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1993; Carpenter, Ted Galen. *America Entangled: The Persian Gulf Crisis and its Consequences*. Washington, D.C., Cato Institute, 1991; Atkinson, Rick. *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1993; and Watson, W. Bruce. *Military Lessons of the Gulf War*. Novato, Calif, Presidio Books, 1991; Baram, Amatzia and Rubin, Barry. *Iraq’s Road to War*. New York, St. Martin Press, 1993

the Iraqi-Iranian exhausting war (1980-1989) Saddam decided to involve his country in such an adventurous undertaking which turned out to be fatal for Iraq. Fearing that having invaded Kuwait Saddam would pass on to Saudi Arabia, Washington started to send its military forces to the region simultaneously expanding its diplomatic activity in order to form an international anti-Saddam coalition. Washington considered Syria's participation in the coalition to be extremely important. To this end the USA made serious efforts. Syria was the leaders of "Arab radicalism" and Syria's participation in the war against Iraq would legalize the international coalition's actions in the eyes of Arab masses.

But we must admit that the decision to join the anti-Saddam alliance was not an easy one for the Syrian leader. Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Farouk Sharaa said that at the initial stage they demanded avoidance of double standards. That is, they claimed if "all of us recognize the UN resolutions concerning the Gulf war, then we must realize all the UNO resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict"⁵²⁰. In September, 1990 and in January, 1991, Secretary of State Baker visited Damascus to provide Syria's participation in the anti-Saddam coalition. In return for acceding to the international alliance Damascus considered it necessary to get Washington's guarantee of promoting the process of making peace after the war.

On November 23, 1990, on his way from Saudi Arabia Bush stopped at Geneva where he met Assad. The letter said the following, "After the Gulf war it is extremely important to have stability in the Near East. If you really want stability, then you must settle the Arab-Israeli conflict in terms of the respective UNO resolutions so, as you insist on the necessity of realizing the resolutions on Iraq's intervention of Kuwait"⁵²¹.

Bush assured Assad, "After doing away with Saddam and liberating Kuwait I promise the USA shall promote the peacemaking process fairly and decisively"⁵²². Assad consented to accede to the alliance only on condition that Israel did not take part in the war. He openly formulated his fears and

⁵²⁰ Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. The Fifty Years of War Israel and the Arabs, p.202

⁵²¹ Ibid, pp.200-205

⁵²² Ibid, p. 203

Syria's further steps based on them, "If Israel breaks into Jordan in order to get to Iraq, we will stand beside Jordan against Israel"⁵²³.

The US President kept his promise. During the war, when Iraq hit Tel-Aviv and Haifa with Scud missiles, Baker and Bush spoke to Shamir on the phone persuading him not to answer Iraq's blows, "keep away from the war"⁵²⁴ and promising him all kinds of assistance. Israel's reaction might change the anti-Saddam nature of the war and render it some shades of Arab-Israeli war. And that would result in the Arab countries' quitting the coalition, and the latter would collapse. After all, Saddam would strike Israel to this end which the USA could not allow to happen.

Assad's decision of joining the international coalition headed by the USA was a step calculated excellently.

The Persian Gulf crisis was beneficial to Damascus not only economically. It enabled Damascus to improve its positions in the international sphere.⁵²⁵ Syria's joining with Egypt and Saudi Arabia against Israel put an end to Syria's isolation in the Arab world and internationally.

The Persian Gulf crisis gave Assad an opportunity to realize the goal he had been pursuing for 15 years – to rule Lebanon. As we have already noted, breaking into Lebanon in 1976, as a result of the civil war, Syria consistently spread its influence in that country. In 1980 the 40-thousand Syrian army took control of nearly two-thirds of the Lebanese territory. When the Gulf crisis distracted the international community's attention, and Saddam Hussein stopped assisting his Lebanese "protégé" it was Assad's turn to act. On October 13, 1990, Assad took control of the major part of the country and Beirut within three hours. The only exception was the "security zone" in the South of the country bordering Israel. The Gulf war eventually paved the way towards the peacemaking process in the Near East, the process in which Syria took an active part.

⁵²³ Ibid, p. 203

⁵²⁴ In return for abstaining from delivering blows Bush promised Shamir "an open cheque" for military, economic, political and all kinds of assistance". Baker, James. Politics of Diplomacy, p. 423

⁵²⁵ During the war only the rise of oil prices provided Syria with an income of \$ 200 million annually. After the war financial influxes were carried out - \$200 million from the EU. \$500 million from Japan as a loan, \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Arab Emirates.

Madrid Peace Conference – Beginning of an Unfinished Way

The cooperation of the Soviet Union with the USA in the Gulf war came to prove once more that the terms of cold war had changed, and the leading diplomatic role of the USA had been recorded.

Later the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of cold war gave rise to an absolutely new situation and new correlation of forces in the Middle East: some Arab countries, especially Syria and the Palestinians found themselves in a predicament.

It was patent that the political vitality of Assad's administration and Syria's security was, to a great extent, to depend upon Syria's further relations with the USA.

After the Gulf war the American policy in the Middle East also underwent some changes. Washington pursued two major goals. First, Washington strove to take unilateral complete control of the Near-Eastern oil and provide its unimpeded shipping to the West. Second, the USA concentrated on the peacemaking process aiming at an agreement on security and cooperation between Israel and Arab countries.

But this time Syria was not overlooked in the peacemaking process. Moreover, it was regarded as one of the key participants. In a letter to Assad Bush emphasized his "personal interest in establishing universal peace" and admitted Syria's decisive role" in achieving that goal⁵²⁶.

It must be noted that in the period between August 1, 1991 and February 19, 1992, the USA allowed the delivery of \$3 million worth of second-hand goods to Syria, as the first step towards détente. Those goods had been produced for civil needs but they "could be used in the military sphere"⁵²⁷.

In order to activate the peacemaking process US Secretary of State Baker paid eight visits to the Middle East in 1991 during which to tried to persuade the conflicting sides to sit sound the table for negotiations under the aegis of an international conference. Baker considered Syria's participation in the peace conference to be of vital significance. On March 13 a seven-hour meeting of Assad and Baker was held in Damascus. After the meeting Baker

⁵²⁶ International Herald Tribune. 25.10.1994

⁵²⁷ CRS Issue Brief. Syrian-US Relations, May 13.1995, by Alfred B. Prados, The Library of Congress.

phoned Bush and said, "Assad has quite serious intentions of making peace"⁵²⁸.

On April 23 Baker again arrived in Damascus. US Ambassador to Syria E. Djerejian told the Secretary of State about Assad's manner of conducting talks. He said, "No one can predict how long the talks will last. Assad does not like breaks and intervals. You should limit the amount of drinks during the talks"⁵²⁹.

The US Ambassador advice was to the point – the meeting lasted for 9 hours and 46 minutes without an interval. Problems connected with proceedings became the object of prolonged discussions at the talks. Though Baker stated that Israel "hated the UN" and would never agree to the participation of the UN in the conference Assad insisted on the necessity of UN participation as a co-sponsor together with the USA and USSR.

Such a standpoint can, perhaps, be explained by the fact that Damascus wanted the decisions that were going to be adopted at the conference to be of compulsory nature. Trying to find a way out Baker made use of the last trump card, "Mr. President, why are we wasting time on issues connected with proceedings instead of discussing the problem of the withdrawal of the Israeli forces? You cannot regain the Golans unless Israel is ready to withdraw its troops. And they will withdraw the troops provided they get security guarantees from the USA. We may, possibly, be ready to give such a guarantee which we have not given before"⁵³⁰. Baker's words were misinterpreted by the Syrians who thought that the United States promised to guarantee the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Golans. The next day Baker said to Assad angrily, "If I had promised to guarantee their withdrawal, there would be no need for negotiations in general". Closing his folder Baker said in conclusion, "Mr. President, I do not think that we can cooperate with each other"⁵³¹. Baker's negotiations in Damascus yielded nothing. It was quite evident that despite trifling compromises the sides were not yet ready to negotiate.

On May 31, 1991, Bush sent letters to Israel's Prime Minister Shamir, Syria's President Assad, King Hussein of Jordan, King Fahd of

⁵²⁸ Baker, James. *Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 428

⁵²⁹ Baker, James. *Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 454

⁵³⁰ Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. *The Fifty Years of War Israel and the Arabs*, p.

²¹¹

⁵³¹ Ibid

Saudi Arabia, Egypt's President Mubarak and Head of the Palestinian occupied areas Faisal Hussein requesting them to make a final decision concerning their participation in the Middle-Eastern Peace Summit Conference. The first positive reaction was heard on July 14 when Assad sent Bush a letter accepting his proposals and thus putting the Israeli authorities in a tight corner. Yet, on July 29, in his interview to the "Washington Post" Assad commented on his letter as follows, "Willingness to participate in the peace conference does not mean that we have to agree with Israel. It shall not happen unless Israel returns all the occupied Arab areas"⁵³². Nevertheless Arab papers wrote, "Assad's answer to Bush annulled all the calculations of the enemy and put an end to the accusations of Shamir's government that the Arabs do not want to establish peace"⁵³³.

Meanwhile Shamir's administration continued the extremist policy in the Golans and generally in the occupied Arab areas. To stress their determination to keep the Golans at any cost the Israeli government issued a project on July 21, 1991, which proclaimed their intention of increasing the Jewish population, promoting economic development and creating new jobs in the Golans. And while General Y. Barak, Head of the Israeli Army Officers, publicly stated the importance of the Golans for Israel's security, 69 members of the Knesset, the members of the Labour Party included, signed a document which confirmed their determination to keep the Golans.

Yet Israel's main concern was neither the Golans, nor Syria. It was the United States. In June, 1991, having conducted talks with Baker a number of times Tel-Aviv turned down the American proposal of holding a Near-Eastern peace conference. Tel-Aviv was confident that it would be rejected by Syria as well. It is also possible that Shamir and his colleagues suspected that Bush had promised Assad to put pressure upon Israel to leave the Golans within the framework of the peace agreement which was to be concluded. Reacting to such a possibility of the scenario Israel's Minister of Defence Moshe Arens said, "The USA has no authority to promise such a thing. We are in the Golans and not the Americans". Binyamin Begin stated at the Knesset, "As the hand is part of the body so the Golans are part of the state of Israel". Other officials noted that they were to remind Bush about ex-President Ford's letter to Israel's Prime Minister Rabin on September, 1975,

⁵³² "Washington Post", 29 July, 1991

⁵³³ , 18.07.1991 and , 19.08.1991

in which the American President approved of "the Israeli presence in the Golans even in terms of a peace agreement with Syria"⁵³⁴. However, not to impede, for strategic considerations, the loan of \$ 10 billion expected from the USA and meant to settle the Soviet Jews as well as to evade the Americans' accusations of obstructionism and "to kick the ball into the Syrians' half-field" on October 22, 1991, the Council of Ministers of Israel decided to take part in the coming peace conference in Madrid.

On October 30, 1991, the Near-Eastern International Peace Conference headed by two chairmen, Bush and Gorbachev, was held in Madrid. Israel, Syria, Lebanon as well as a joint Jordan-Palestinian delegation took part in it. The representatives of the UNO General Secretary and EU as well as the Ambassador of Saudi Arabia were also present. Though the Americans and Israelites had agreed not to refer to the formula "peace in return for land" Bush noted, "We firmly believe that territorial compromise is of vital importance for peace. The borders must reflect the quality of security as well as political correlation"⁵³⁵. The first two days were relatively quiet at the conference. But on the third day the atmosphere got heated after Shamir's speech which reacted to that of Syria's Minister of Defense calling the Syrian administration "the most extremist government of power" and Syria a "terrorist" country. After Shamir Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Farouk al-Sharaa took the floor holding a sheet of paper in his hand and said, "I am going to show you Mr. Shamir's photo. Do you know why this photo was sent everywhere? It is because he was wanted by intelligence services. In 1948 he assisted, if I am not mistaken, the assassination of UN Envoy C. Bernadot in Palestine. He assassinates peace envoys"⁵³⁶. The next crisis in the course of the conference occurred when the Americans proposed holding direct negotiations between the Arab delegations and Israel at different places and different times while the Syrians demanded that the negotiations be held at the same place and at the same time. In the end the parties agreed to a compromise version – holding direct negotiations at the same hotel but at different times.

Madrid Conference paved a new way to peace and prepared a basis for further historic events in the region. It was of key political significance

⁵³⁴ "Maariv" 21 and 23 July, 1991; "Haaretz" 20 and 22 July, 1991

⁵³⁵ Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. The Fifty Years of War Israel and the Arabs, p. 216

⁵³⁶ Ibid, p. 220

since, for the first time, the conflicting parties sat round a table to negotiate. For the first time the Palestinians participated in an international conference and spoke out themselves. The most essential outcome of the conference was the agreement of the parties on continuing the process of negotiations.

Another aspect of Madrid's significance is the fact that the Conference created, for the first time, a mechanism of negotiations held in two parallel directions. The first direction was multi-lateral talks during which Israel, the Arab countries of the region and other countries outside the region were able to join in the discussions of five major problems existing in the Middle East— those of water, environment, armament control, refugees and economic development. These discussions were held in Moscow in January, 1992, but the Syrians refused to participate in them substantiating their refusal by the fact that since Israel continued to control the occupied Golans, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip it was senseless to hold any talks on lasting regional security. The second direction was that of bilateral talks during which Israel was to negotiate with its Arab neighbours in Washington, i.e. with Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinians.

After Madrid Conference the Syrian-Israeli talks continued from November till June, 1992, when I. Shamir suffered a defeat in the elections, yielding no practical result. At the talks Israel was represented by General Secretary of the Prime Minister's Office Yossi Ben Aharon and Syria by Ambassador M.al-Allaf. But they wasted their time discussing problems connected with the past. Thus al-Allaf produced the UN report which proved that Israel had instigated the border clashes by 1967. Ben Aharon would not listen to this. According to one of the diplomats present at the talks "Ben Aharon left the table of the negotiations, then returned with a tea-cup in his hand and started striking the spoon against the cup while Allaf was reading the document. Then Ben Aharon rose and began dancing. "Don't forget that I come from Alexandria, Egypt. I know how to perform Arab dances", he said. When Allaf finishing reading the document Ben Aharon said, "I did not hear anything as I was busy dancing".⁵³⁷

In June, 1992, after the elections in Israel, the Labour Party headed by Yitzhak Rabin came to power. Who could expect the party that initiated the occupation of the Arab lands and resettlement of the Jews there, to

⁵³⁷ Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. The Fifty Years of War Israel and the Arabs, p. 258

undertake hastening the peacemaking process and concluding historic agreements with the Palestinians and Jordan? Moreover, its leader I. Rabin paid for peace with his own life.

Very soon after Rabin had come to power, some Western mass media started publishing information about the intention of the head of the government to return the Golans which had belonged to Israel since 1967 six-day war. By the way, even the champions of the idea of "Great Israel" admitted that the Golans had never been an Israeli area and that they were inhabited by Druzes and Arabs.

Rabin's official statement that his government was ready to give up complete control of the Golans in some way or other aroused the indignation of Israeli right nationalist forces. The chairman of the Israeli "Council of the Golans", Volman, characterized Rabin's words as "madness", dated, to shed the accusations, Rabin stated in his speeches that Israel could agree only "to partial withdrawal from the Golans" and only on condition that they regulated their political, economic, diplomatic relations with Syria completely on the basis of agreements, and established firm and lasting peace.⁵³⁸

After Rabin had been elected the Syrians and Israelites met, for the first time, in Washington on August 24, 1992; The Syrian delegation was headed by Ambassador M. al-Allaf and the Israeli delegation was headed by Itamar Rabinovich, an eminent expert at Arab history and a friend of Rabin's. On the first day of the negotiations Rabinovich stated that the Israeli government recognised all the provisions of UN Security Council Resolution 242. This statement marked the change in Israel's standpoint in principle. So if Shamir's administration had rejected the principle of returning the Golans in return for peace, Rabin's administration consented to it. The following day taking advantage of the favourable atmosphere Allaf presented the Draft Declaration of Principles consisting of 4 pages to the Israeli side. The first three pages contained the programme of universal peace among the Arab countries and Israel and the last page dealt with Syria and Israel. It read; "The peacemaking process had been going on for 11 months without any tangible result. We think, if we want to carry out the goals of the peacemaking process in practice, it is time we create, without any claims, a

⁵³⁸ Пырлин Е.Д. Трудный и долгий путь к миру: Взгляд из Москвы на проблему ближневосточного урегулирования, с. 308-381

distinctly balanced and impartial document which will state all the basic principles without which it will be impossible to establish peace”.

Article 5 (A) of the Draft Declaration concerned the mechanisms of Realization;

“Complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Golan Heights of Syria where, contrary to Geneva Convention, international law and UN Resolutions, the Israeli forces displaced the Syrians from all the settlements”. Article 7 of the Draft Declaration dealt with the measures and guarantees of Security⁵³⁹;

“The two parties declare their determination to take measures, mutually and parallelly, aimed at their security, including, on equal terms, creation of demilitarized zones or zones of reduced armaments on both sides, as well as to obtain security guarantees from the Security Council for both sides without violating the principle of jurisdiction and equal rights of the sides”⁵⁴⁰.

Rabinovich suggested beginning the negotiations with article 7 which concerned the security issues and guarantees, while Allaf insisted on article 5(a).

Syria's Ambassador to the USA Walid Muallem recollects, “From August 1992 till August 1993 the talks merely concentrated on the problem which article to begin the negotiations with. No progress was recorded on that issue”⁵⁴¹.

According to I. Rabinovich the Syrian document contained both admissible and inadmissible provisions for Israel, and the purpose of the Israeli delegation in the course of the negotiations was “the creation of a joint balanced document admissible for both sides”. The Israeli side supposed that the Syrians were not actually ready for the compromising settlement of the Golans and demanded “complete withdrawal of the Israeli forces”. In addition the Syrians did not consent to carry out certain operations aimed at creating an atmosphere of trust, in particular, to establish a secret connection

⁵³⁹ Further detailed information concerning the Syrian-Israeli talks of 1992-1996 is available in I. Rabinovich' valuable research. *The Brink of Peace. The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*. Princeton University Press, 1998.

⁵⁴⁰ The text of the Draft Declaration was first published in the following researches. Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. *The Fifty Years of War Israel and the Arabs*, pp.259-260.

⁵⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 261

between Syria and Israel which could be used by the sides to exchange non-official, sincere opinions⁵⁴².

In November, 1992, Bill Clinton was elected President of the USA. Assad had regarded Bush's administration and its policy toward Syria to be “friendly” but Clinton's election caused Damascus some concern, in particular, for the reason that Clinton “had been elected owing to the American Jews' support and was known to be an advocate of democratic Israel”⁵⁴³.

In one of his interviews Assad said the following about the prospects of establishing peace, “I am a realist. The prospects are better since the international atmosphere is favourable, and the number of people yearning for peace has grown in Israel”. Rabin, in his turn, stated that he believed peace to be established but he was not sure that “it would come true in his lifetime”⁵⁴⁴. Yet both of them realized the perspectives of peace would greatly depend on the US intermediary efforts. Despite the pro-Israeli posture of Clinton's administration and his Near-Eastern team Damascus was, nonetheless, determined to resume the peacemaking talks patronized by the USA⁵⁴⁵.

It must be noted that the Syrian-Israeli negotiations were definitely affected by the Palestinian-Israeli talks going on simultaneously. It was not beneficial for Syria if an agreement was concluded with the Palestinians (or Jordan) before signing on agreement with Israel. With regard to this Assad observed, “The authorities of Tel-Aviv headed by Rabin are known to try to differentiate between the Arab negotiators. At the eighth phase of the talks they stated that the progress in the Syrian-Israeli direction was obvious and the conclusion of an agreement was inevitable. Today they are playing the same game speaking about the success in the Palestinian direction. Syria could have concluded a bilateral agreement with Israel much earlier but we have always repeated that we are concerned about the fate of Jerusalem, the West Bank and South Lebanon no less than about the Golans”⁵⁴⁶.

⁵⁴² Пырлин Е.Д. Трудный и долгий путь к миру: Взгляд из Москвы на проблему ближневосточного урегулирования, с. 381

⁵⁴³ “Al-Baath”, 3.12.1992; “Tishrin”, Damascus 09.11.1992

⁵⁴⁴ Moshe Maoz. *Syria and Israel. From War to Peacemaking*, p. 231.

⁵⁴⁵ “Al-Hayat”, 04.03.1993

⁵⁴⁶ “Al-Wasat”, 10.05.1993.

The ninth phase of the Syrian-Israeli talks was resumed in Washington on April 27, 1993. However the parties were unable to smooth the essential disagreements within the next two meetings. The Israeli side went on demanding that the Syrians produce a clear-cut interpretation of the expression "complete peace" as well as recognize the necessity of Israel's security. They also wanted Assad to make public speeches in order to prepare the public opinion for establishing peace, both in Syria and Israel. The Israeli negotiators also demanded to clarify the connection between universal Arab-Israeli and Syrian-Israeli settlements. Only after that the Israeli party was willing to discuss the problem of withdrawing from the Golans. The Syrian side went on claiming the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all the Arab areas occupied in 1967- in return for "complete peace" without clarifying the meaning of that peace. Thus the Syrian Israeli negotiations ended in deadlock.

On August 4, 1993, new US State Secretary Christopher left for the region trying to find a way out. During the meeting with Rabin the latter unexpectedly asked the Secretary of State to get a clear-cut answer from Assad if the Syrian side was ready to establish peace in case the Israeli troops left the Golans. Rabin attached importance to this question explaining in the following way: "If Assad means to conclude a Syrian-Israeli agreement, it will be followed by a smaller Palestinian-Israeli agreement. In case Assad's answer is negative, then only a large Palestinian-Israeli agreement will be concluded"⁵⁴⁷.

The next day Christopher left for Syria to discuss the matter with Assad. Assad reacted to the suggestion positively expressing his willingness to establish peace in return for the Golans. But according to the analysis of the US State Secretary Assad answered, "Yes, but ...". "But" referred to the time limit of the withdrawal process – Rabin proposed a period of 5 years, while Assad insisted on six months. There was also disagreement on the measures providing security. Rabin laid emphasis on equivalent security measures while Assad stressed the principle of equality on both sides of the border, which was inadmissible for Rabin since it would mean withdrawing the Israeli troops from nearly half the frontier areas of Galilee. Assad rejected any détente with Israel before the withdrawal of the troops from the Golans.

Disappointed at Assad's reply Rabin decided to stop the negotiations with the Syrians temporarily and focus on the Israeli-Palestinian agreement. With respect to this Rabin told Rabinovich that he could not "raise two flags simultaneously"⁵⁴⁸.

When Christopher and Ross, his Near-Eastern Special Coordinator, returned to Washington they did not know yet that their summer holidays would soon be interrupted by the visit of Israel's and Norway's Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Peres and Holst, who informed them about some essential progress made during the talks between the Israelites and Palestinians in Oslo.

On September 9, after prolonged talks, Israel's Prime Minister Rabin and PLO leader Arafat exchanged letters by which they recognized each other. Four days later the official ceremony of signing the Declaration "About the Principles" was held in the White House. In the same year gradual rapprochement between Israel and Jordan was initiated which ended in concluding a peace treaty on October 25, 1994.

The Syrian official daily wrote about PLO-Israeli Agreement, "Rabin is mistaken to think that conclusion of a peace treaty with the Palestinians is enough to complete the peacemaking process. It is not so. If he has serious intentions he has to continue the process with us"⁵⁴⁹. Assad expressed his opinion of the Agreement with the following statement, "The hasty conclusion of the treaty between Israel and the Palestinians simply destroyed the united Arab wall against Israel. Israel succeeded in splitting the Arabs. I mean it complicated the problem of complete withdrawal of the Israeli forces from all the occupied Arab areas, the Golans included"⁵⁵⁰.

The Agreement concluded with PLO, indeed, reduced Syria's chances of maneuvering in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Peace Agreements concluded first with Egypt, later with Jordan and PLO, undoubtedly, delivered a blow to Assad's pretentious posture of representing the whole Arab "homeland". The independence of PLO was, naturally, a source of concern for Damascus. We have already noted Assad's policy of supporting other Palestinian groups to counter-balance Y. Arafat's PLO. After the conclusion of the Agreement Syria's leader did not try to conceal anything;

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ "Tishrin", 18.10.1995

⁵⁵⁰ Ford, Peter. Syria's 3-Part Strategy: Rely on the US. Christian Science Monitor. 19.10.1993

⁵⁴⁷ Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. The Fifty Years of War Israel and the Arabs, p. 262

"After the conclusion of the Agreement in Oslo we do not do anything to render the Palestinians any assistance, I mean PLO as it has taken the responsibility. I have informed the PLO President about it. The Agreement does not please us nevertheless we do not hamper it, we do not want our relations with the Palestinian brothers to grow worse, what is going on in our Arab Homeland is already enough"⁵⁵¹.

Syria and Peacemaking Process

The conclusion of PLO-Israeli Agreement made Assad more vulnerable increasing his suspicions concerning Israel's real goals. Under the circumstances, on the pretext of moving forward on the Palestinian and Jordanian fronts Rabin gained a new means of pressure to make Assad yield. The latter could not expect any assistance from the Arab countries with the exception of Mubarak's oral and diplomatic aid⁵⁵². Consequently the only person whom Assad could turn to for help was US President Clinton.

But Clinton, being busy with the problems of Bosnia and Somali refused not only to compel Rabin to recognize the Syrian jurisdiction in the Golans but also to bear any responsibility for the complete withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Golans. However Clinton continually demanded that Assad resume the negotiations with Israel and enable the latter to carry out the Agreement with PLO. To demonstrate his interest in the Syrian-Israeli agreement Clinton met Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sharaa in Washington in October, 1993.

Then, in mid-November, Clinton met Rabin and spoke with Assad several times on the phone. Clinton also undertook preparatory work for the meeting with Assad in Geneva in January 1994. In October and at the beginning of December Clinton sent Ross and Christopher to Damascus and Jerusalem to discuss the possibilities of resuming the Syrian-Israeli

negotiations. As a gesture of goodwill Washington allowed to transport three second-hand planes "Boeing 727" from Kuwait to Syria⁵⁵³.

Damascus made some steps in response, promising to allow the American experts' participation in the investigation of the case concerning the missing Israeli soldiers and authorising the Jews' emigration from Syria (about 1000 people). Assad said to the American senators visiting Damascus, "We strive for all-embracing universal settlement. Even a semi-literate (uneducated) person must be able to understand the significance of that peace". Abdul Halim Khaddam commented on it, "The contents of peace include recognition (i'tria) and (regulation) normalization of relations (tatbi). These are the objects of discussion at the present talks"⁵⁵⁴. Some Syrian mass media noted that establishment of peace was "a strategic choice" (khiyar istratiji), that the USA as "a party enjoying full rights" at the talks and as "a fair intermediary" was to put pressure on Israel to carry out UN Resolution 242. Perhaps Assad hoped that Clinton would take Syria out of the list of the countries supporting terrorism which would enable his administration to receive economic assistance from Western countries and international organizations.

Having no intention to exclude Syria from that list Clinton however went on with the process of rapprochement with Assad meaning to continue the "double restraint" policy towards Iran and Iraq and keep on the process of Arab-Israeli peacemaking. Washington was confident that the meeting of Clinton and Assad would stimulate the Syrian-Israeli negotiations and establishment of "universal, fair and lasting peace".

In autumn, 1993, before organizing the meeting of Assad and Clinton in Geneva, the Americans asked Israel, "What concessions do you want us to get from Assad during the meeting?" Rabinovich answered, "We want Assad to consent to the principle of détente"⁵⁵⁵.

On January 16, 1994, meeting Clinton in Geneva Syrian President, for the first time, officially stated that he intended to make peace with Israel. During this meeting Assad made another important statement, "I want peace not only between Syria and Israel but also between Israel and Jordan and Lebanon". Then he added, "I want to see Lebanon as an independent state

⁵⁵¹ 23.11.1995 H. Assad's interview during his visit to Cairo. Мир глазами президента Хafeз Асада, с. 120

⁵⁵² In October, 1993, Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs F. al-Sharaa, meeting Mubarak in Cairo, requested him to raise the issue of the Golans once more during his meeting with the US President.

⁵⁵³ Los Angeles Times. 06.12.1993, New York Times. 10.12.1993

⁵⁵⁴ "Al-Hayat", 05.01.1994

⁵⁵⁵ Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. The Fifty Years of War Israel and the Arabs, p. 262

having made peace with Israel"⁵⁵⁶. Yet in the course of the talks lasting for more than five hours Assad did not clarify if "normal, peaceful relations and "real" peace with Israel involved regular diplomatic relations, open borders and tourism between the two countries".

At the press conference, after the talks were over, to confirm the seriousness of his peaceful intentions Assad stated, "We want to establish real peace which will be able to last. If the Israeli leaders have enough courage to establish such peace, then a new era of security and stability will begin and normal peaceful relations will be established among all"⁵⁵⁷.

Here it is worth mentioning Clinton's interpretation of Assad's words. Positively answering the question whether Assad had committed himself to establish normal relations with Israel Clinton said, "President Assad made a clear and important statement about regular relations. At present it is necessary to conclude a peace treaty in order to establish such relations". During the press conference Clinton not only emphasized Syria's key role in establishing universal and lasting peace but also supported Assad's principle according to which "establishment of universal peace also included Lebanon, Jordan and settlement of all the problems connected with PLO"⁵⁵⁸. So, deeply impressed by Assad's determination of making peace with Israel, Clinton expressed his personal dedication to the cause of establishing peace in the Middle East.

Israeli leaders could not be satisfied with the perspectives of the afore-mentioned meeting since they intended, first and foremost, to deepen the negotiations with Jordan and the Palestinians. Rabin and Peres were concerned about the unfavourable atmosphere that was growing inside the country connected with the withdrawal from the Golans. According to the plebiscite the majority of the population objected to the withdrawal of the troops from the Golans in return for peace⁵⁵⁹. That is the reason why a day after Clinton – Assad meeting Rabin announced that any agreement with Syria would be signed only after holding a plebiscite.

In January-February, 1994, the talks went on in Washington, mainly between the ambassadors of the two countries, where the Syrians criticized

⁵⁵⁶ The Jerusalem Post-Alon Pinkas. 17.01.1994

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁸ For the full text of the press conference, see , 18.01.1994; "Policywatch". III, 19.01.1994; "The New York Times" and "Washington Post", 17.01.1994

⁵⁵⁹ "International Herald Tribune". 16.01.1994

Israel for their intention of holding a plebiscite on the withdrawal from the Golans, and the latter demanded that the Syrians clarify the principles of establishing peace and relations with Israel. In February, 1994, the Syrian-Israeli negotiations were interrupted because of the murder of 4 Israeli soldiers in South Lebanon and about 30 Arab Muslims in Hebron. An additional reason for interruption was the conclusion of PLO-Israeli Agreement on Gaza and Jerico.

On September 10, 1994, Assad made a speech at the Syrian Parliament in which he said that he was determined to demand the complete withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Golans. In Assad's words "Despite the current difficulties and absence of progress there is certain hope that peace can eventually become reality"⁵⁶⁰. A week earlier Rabin had suggested the idea of partial withdrawal from the Golans in return for a three-year testing period of regulating the relations. Yet Syria went on demanding complete withdrawal of the Israeli troops during a press conference in London. Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs al-Sharaa stated, "Syria sincerely yearns for peace"⁵⁶¹. This was quite reassuring considering the fact that the words "sincerity" "peace" and "Israel" were rarely to be found in one Syrian official sentence.

In the same year, in October, US Special Envoy Denis Ross visited Damascus. The Israeli paper "Yedioth Ahronot" commented on the visit as a US attempt at organizing a historic handshake between the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Israel and Syria at the General Assembly of the UNO⁵⁶². Having met Assad Ross noted, "There are actual disagreements between Syria and Israel"⁵⁶³.

The highlight in the Syrian-American relations was Clinton's visit to Damascus. In the course of 20 years after Nixon, Clinton became the first American President who visited the Syrian capital. The US President paid this visit within the framework of his tour in the Middle East intending to participate in the official ceremony of concluding the Israeli-Jordanian Agreement on October 26. In a talk lasting for 3 hours Clinton and Assad discussed the chances of a Syrian-Israeli Agreement. In Clinton's words he visited Damascus without considering the fact that the Department of State

⁵⁶⁰ "New York Times" 22.09.1994

⁵⁶¹ Ibid

⁵⁶² "Yedioth Ahronot", 21.09.1994

⁵⁶³ "International Herald Tribune", 22.09.1994

had included Syria in the list of the countries supporting terrorism, as "he was sure it was necessary to give a fresh impetus to the negotiations of the two countries". As an initial step in that direction the two Presidents discussed the possibilities of raising the level of the negotiations and of public criticism of terrorism by Assad. After this meeting Clinton made a speech at the Israeli Parliament in which he said, "I believe that certain changes are under way in Syria. The leaders of that country gradually begin to realize that the time of peace has come. Though the future holds hard negotiations"⁵⁶⁴. The significance of Clinton's visit to Israel and Syria was that the US President kept his promise to promote peace on condition that Israel agreed to return the Golans to Syria.

The USA was sure that Damascus was ready to make peace with Israel in return for the Golans, nonetheless both Clinton and Christopher abstained from putting pressure on Rabin to withdraw from the Golans. The American leaders were well aware of the sentiments connected with the issue, so they were acting step by step; they made political statements about the Golans in order to prepare the public opinion in Israel, stimulated the peacemaking process with PLO and Jordan and rendered considerable military assistance to Israel.

At the end of November, 1994, Rabin visited Washington to discuss the idea of American presence in the Golan Heights. During the talk with the US President Rabin said he was convinced that American military presence in the Golans was a must in establishing Arab-Israeli peace. In Rabin's words "the American military forces are not going to act as police forces. Their task will be of technical, controlling nature"⁵⁶⁵. He also underscored the possible undesirable consequences both for Israel and the whole region in case the USA had a declinatory posture towards the deployment of a limited contingent in the Golans. As it turned out later the Israeli leaders had already decided to demand an extremely "high price" from Washington in return for making peace with Syria if the USA turned down the proposal. In case the Israeli troops withdrew from the Golans, the Israeli leaders asked the Pentagon for \$2,5 billion worth of military aid as a compensation for the expenses necessary for providing the country's security. They produced a

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, 28.10.1994

⁵⁶⁵ "Washington Post", 29.11.1994

detailed list of spy planes, communication stations, satellite information stations and other necessary military equipment.

In the first half of 1995 the Syrian-Israeli bilateral contacts continued. Some news was spread in Israeli and foreign press that Assad's son and his nephew secretly met Israeli scholars, political scientists and businessmen. And the Israeli opposition stated that Syria and Israel had prepared a secret agreement in terms of which Israel was going to withdraw its forces, gradually, from the Golans. But, as a matter of fact, the Syrian-Israeli negotiations (between Muallem and Rabinovich) being on the whole fruitless, with the exception of the document "The goals and principles of security measures" of May 21, 1995, "were frozen". They were resumed more actively only in June, 1995, when the US agency of foreign policy tried to hasten the conclusion of the Syrian-Israeli Agreement before the elections in Israel and the USA in 1996. To this end US Special Envoy Ross visited Damascus where he met the Syrian leadership. US President Clinton had a talk with Assad on the phone appealing to activate the process that was making no progress.

Christopher's next, 13-th visit to the region in June pursued the same goal. In was arranged with Assad that on June 27 the heads of Syria's and Israel's officers, H. Shehabi and E. Barak as well as experts of both countries would meet in Washington to discuss the details of the security measures in the Golans. The parties came to an agreement on a wide range of technical matters. Yet Syria considered Israel to be responsible for the absence of any progress. As some Syrian officials noted the consultations failed because of Israel's attempts at concentrating on the problems of its own security.

Instead of discussing its withdrawal from the Golans the Israeli side put forward a number of initiatives manifestly inadmissible for Syria, in particular the proposal of creating "watch sentry posts" and "security zones". At the same time, in July, 1995, on the day of Ross' arrival in Damascus, the radio of Damascus informed that Syria had agreed to the deployment of "international peacemaking forces" in the Golans⁵⁶⁶.

⁵⁶⁶ "Дума" (Bulgarian daily), 12.07.1995

To overcome the problems hampering the conclusion of a Syrian-Israeli Peace Agreement the Israeli side even offered to arrange the meeting of Assad and Rabin⁵⁶⁷.

In July, 1995, Israel's Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Yossi Beilin, who was in Moscow within the framework of the sitting of the working committee of Madrid Conference stated, "Israel's dream is to complete the peacemaking process involving Syria, and therefore Lebanon, too, which would mark the end of the conflict. The difficulty is the impossibility of direct contact. If a summit of the two countries is held, it is possible to achieve the unexpected"⁵⁶⁸.

Yet on November 4, 1995, Rabin was assassinated during a peaceful rally. The crime gave rise to indignation all over the world. Rabin's murder put all the arrangements, achieved during the Syrian-Israeli negotiations in the course of the past years, under a question mark.

Peres replaced Rabin and like his predecessors combined his new appointment with that of the Minister of Defence announcing, "One person must supervise peace as well as security"⁵⁶⁹. After Rabin's funeral Clinton talked with Peres in private. Only during that talk Peres realized how much progress had been made by Rabin in the course of the negotiations. He was quite unaware that Rabin had agreed to withdraw the troops from the Golans reaching the line of June 4, 1967, on condition that the relations were regulated, a term of 5 years for the withdrawal was agreed upon and equivalent security measures were taken. Nevertheless Peres informed Clinton that he would carry out all the arrangements achieved by Rabin.

On November 19, 1995, American Envoy Ross again arrived in Israel to inform Peres all the details of the Syrian-Israeli negotiations and thus make the picture complete for the latter. Peres told Ross he was ready to sign an agreement with Syria. He also added, "If we agree with Assad, we must meet all the Arab leaders and declare that the conflict has come to an end. After that we can conclude an all-embracing treaty on the end of the war

in the Near East"⁵⁷⁰. To demonstrate how serious his intentions were Peres wrote a letter in handwriting, gave it to Ross asking to pass it to Assad. Getting acquainted with the contents of the letter Assad said to Ross, "It is a good letter". When Ross assured Peres that Assad's intentions were serious he said, "If Assad wants to conclude a peace treaty before the elections in Israel in 1996, then the level of the negotiations must be raised". Peres wanted to meet Assad in person. Assad replied to Peres' offer in the following way, "I understand that my meeting with Peres is necessary but I cannot mention a definite date"⁵⁷¹.

The first Syrian-Israeli meeting after Rabin's assassination took place on December 27, 1995. It was held in an official residence 80 km away from Washington. The Syrian delegation was headed by Walid Muallem while the head of the Israeli delegation was Uri Savir, a young diplomat⁵⁷². The Syrian side presented three items of regulating the relations that envisaged opening embassies in both countries, annulling the ban on the trade of Israeli goods and authorising tourists' movement through Syria to Turkey. The Israeli delegation put forward a list of 18 items which included opening the borders of Syria and Israel for tourists, free trade between the two countries, mutual linking of road, broadcasting and electric power systems. The parties agreed on 11 items of settlement.

This meeting was followed by the negotiations of security experts of the two countries held in Washington on January 24, 1996. From the Syrian side, besides Ambassador Muallem, Ibrahim Omar, Head of Military Intelligence, and Major – General Hassan Khalil took part in the negotiations, while from the Israeli side General Uzi Dayan was present. After a short interval the talks were resumed but the Israeli delegation interrupted the negotiations and returned to Tel-Aviv after Hamas' terrorist act in Jerusalem when a great number of people were killed and wounded. Peres was no more "in a mood to conduct peace talks "and appointed elections ahead of schedule. On May 29, 1996, Benjamin Netanyahu came to power in Israel.

Thus the Syrian-Israeli negotiations came to an end with no result. The negotiation process of those years simply brought Israel and Syria nearer

⁵⁶⁷ The possibility of organizing a meeting of Assad and Israel's President Ezer Weizman at the RF Embassy in Israel.

⁵⁶⁸ Пырлин Е.Д. Трудный и долгий путь к миру: Взгляд из Москвы на проблему ближневосточного урегулирования, с. 383

⁵⁶⁹ Bregman, Ahron and El-Tahri, Jihan. The Fifty Years of War Israel and the Arabs, p 267

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 268

⁵⁷¹ Ibid

⁵⁷² Uri Savir played an important role in the negotiation process of Oslo-1 and Oslo-2 Palestinian-Israeli Agreements which became a programme of action (orereation).

to the conclusion of an agreement gradually settling the major dissensions existing between the two countries.

Syria and Israel had never been so near the fact of establishing peace. I. Rabinovich writes, "From August, 1992, till March 1996, Syria and Israel were never on the brink of split." Yet they were near that point twice, in August, 1993 and in the first weeks of Peres' power, in November-December, 1995⁵⁷³. Assad and Rabin agreed to the formation of the general formula "Peace in return for the Golans", yet they could not agree on the most important problems such as the schedule of withdrawal (Rabin was trying to fix a five-year process in order to be convinced that Syria was satisfactorily carrying on the normalization of relations), measures connected with border security (Rabin wanted to be confident that Syria would not use the regained areas for attacks on Israel) and normalization of the relations.

Rabin attached importance to public diplomacy and establishing direct bilateral relations with Damascus without Washington's mediation, whereas Assad considered it to be inadmissible and dangerous for some strategic and internal political reasons. And as it turned out the US mediation was not always exact in passing the standpoints of the parties to either of them and sometimes even misinterpreted Israeli or Syrian officials' thoughts and proposals. Furthermore the Israeli side left the answers expected from Damascus to the "supposed" questions at the American diplomats' disposal thus weakening their (Israelites') negotiating positions in the future.

For instance one of the most important issues of the negotiations was the precision of the line along which the Israeli troops were to be withdrawn. In April 1994, during US Secretary of State Christopher's visit to Damascus Assad asked for a precise withdrawal line from the Golans suspecting that Rabin meant the borders existing by 1993. Earlier Rabin had informed Christopher that Israel was ready to fix the borderline according to the one of June 4, 1967, at the same time stressing what he had said was meant for the Americans and not for the Syrians, Rabin regarded his proposal as a kind of "down payment" handed to the Americans⁵⁷⁴. Yet Christopher presented it to Assad as an Israeli proposal thus depriving Rabin of a serious trump card,

⁵⁷³ Rabinovich, Itamar. *The Brink of Peace. The Israeli-Syrian Negotiations*. Princeton p. 235.

⁵⁷⁴ Schiff, Ze'ev. "What did Rabin promise Syrians?" *Haaretz*, 29 August, 1997; Ben Caspit. *Committing Suicide: A Party Gives up Power*. P.53

weakening his portions in the negotiations and giving rise to distrust. And this happened at a moment when an atmosphere of trust was still lacking.

Anyway the conclusion of a peace agreement did not come true, while whatever arrangements had been achieved during the negotiations vanished into thin air after the election of Netanyahu who rejected the previous version of "peace in return for lands" and put forward the principle of "secure peace" considering the withdrawal from the Golans absolutely impossible. Moreover, during his first visit to Washington he tried to persuade Clinton to isolate Syria from the peacemaking process completely.

Rabin had tried to obtain the highest possible compensation from Washington in return for making peace with Syria, whereas Netanyahu declined that possibility as well. For him the oral arrangements achieved at the negotiations with Syria under Rabin and Peres did not mean any official obligation. Though it must be mentioned that he did not exclude the possibility of resuming the negotiations with Syria, and, according to some publications, he was even going to hold a referendum concerning the problem of withdrawing the troops from the Golans. But we think Netanyahu's administration actually adopted the policy of establishing relations with the Palestinians and Lebanon, pushing the Syrian front to the background, a senseless policy "full of prerequisites" and doomed from the very beginning.

Thus, in the face of American intermediaries' efforts the negotiations between Syria and Israel, being on the verge of successful completion for the second time, were frozen. This state of things went on until Ehud Barak was elected in Israel in 1999.

The Last Attempt to Establish Peace between Syria and Israel

The key issues of Syria's foreign policy were formulated in H. Assad's speech on March 11, 1999, on the occasion of being reelected Syria's President. This speech can be considered historic as it was Assad's last programme speech. In the first half of 1999 Syrian diplomacy proceeded to realize the provisions stated in the above-mentioned speech. Thus Syria strove:

1. for final establishment of peace in the region by resuming the peacemaking negotiations from the item where they were interrupted by Netanyahu's coming to power;

2. for pan-Arab unity, for working out a single standpoint towards different problems and expressing it in one united voice;
3. for formation of multi-polar world;
4. for highlighting the role and significance of the UNO, other international organizations and the movement of non-aligned countries;
5. for developing relations with the EU.

We will focus on the Syrian-Israeli negotiation process up to June, 2000, when H. Assad died.

Israel's Prime Minister E. Barak gave rise to new hopes that it would finally be possible to conclude a peace agreement between Syria and Israel, particularly on the day of the inauguration at the Israeli Parliament on June 6, 1999, when Barak made a speech and mentioned in it that he strove for actual peace with all the Arab countries, especially with Syria and Lebanon.

Then, for first time, through Syrian and Israeli press President Assad and Prime Minister Barak exchanged compliments. Assad called Barak "an honest and strong person who really wants peace". And Barak spoke of Assad as "a politician who has created a strong, stable state, reliable to negotiate with, a state that can attend to its duties"⁵⁷⁵. Both sides sent definite signals to each other that they were ready to resume the peacemaking negotiations. Yet everything was not so smooth as it seemed at first sight. The Syrian side insisted that before Netanyahu came to power, in the course of the negotiations of 1993-96 Israel had agreed to withdraw the troops up to the borders existing by 1967, i.e. complete withdrawal from the Golans. So the Syrian side insisted that they begin discussions of security measures.

Thus the Syrian side proposed continuing the negotiations from the item at which they had been interrupted. They also insisted on carrying out the UN Resolutions on Peacemaking Process as well as applying the Madrid principle of "land in return for peace".

Though Barak expressed his willingness to resume the negotiations on peacemaking he did not state any concrete steps toward Syria during the election campaign, whereas he acted differently towards Lebanon promising to withdraw the troops from South Lebanon within one year. Differences of

standpoints between Damascus and Tel-Aviv came to the foreground also on the matter of concluding a united peace agreement with Lebanon and Syria.

The USA, EU (France was the most active) and Egypt offered mediation for resuming the negotiations on the peacemaking process. At the beginning of July 1999, during his visit to the USA Egypt's President Mubarak made an attempt at combining Egypt's efforts with those of the USA. Yet Syria declined the Egyptian version (holding an Arab summit, adoption of a single standpoint, holding a conference on Peacemaking Process in Cairo).

The Syrian side insisted that before Netanyahu came to power Israel had consented to withdraw the troops to the borders existing by 1967. So they were to negotiate only on the problem of security measures. Having given no promise during the election campaign Barak always emphasized the necessity of establishing peace in the Syrian direction and his willingness to do so.

To urge the peacemaking process forward, visits were paid to Syria by Martin Indyk, US Deputy State Secretary on Near-Eastern problems (March 14), US ex-State Secretary Baker and former US Ambassador to Syria Ed. Djerejian (June 15). Problems concerning the peacemaking process were discussed during almost all the visits. We can also add the visit of I. Ivanov, RF Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Damascus and that of Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Sharaa to Moscow.

Though the sides were psychologically ready to resume the negotiations on the peacemaking process there was an enormous difference between Syria's and Israel's standpoints at the end of June as to which item to start the negotiations with. Yehoud Barak's adviser Aitan Haber stated that Israel did not intend to return the whole of the Golans to Syria in return for peace. In his opinion Israel had to keep the part of the Golans necessary from security viewpoint, as well as the warning stations that were to be deployed in the Golans were to remain under Israel's control. Haber blamed the US authorities, particularly former Secretary of State Christopher for misinforming Syria about the intention of Rabin's administration to return all the Golans. According to the advisor Barak intended to start the negotiations on the Golans from scratch. But this statement was neither commented on nor confirmed by Barak.

However the sides stated (though not openly) their intentions to meet each other halfway. Israel's former Minister of Defence definitely rejected the idea of returning the Golans not so much for security considerations but

⁵⁷⁵ The Political Letter of the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Syria on some basic problems of the internal and foreign policy of the Syrian Arab Republic (January-June, 1999). RA MFA Archives, 1999, v. 2

rather for the vital significance of the waters flowing from the Golans. A viewpoint was circulating among the diplomats that Syria was ready to share those waters with Israel. In his turn Israel's Prime Minister announced that the government was going to freeze the construction of houses for re-settlers though the ones that had been started would not be suspended.

Before resuming the Syrian-Israeli negotiations there remained a number of problems needing clarification: if Syria agreed to resume the talks, would it mean that Damascus consented to leave part of the Golans under Israel's control? On the other hand if Barak was willing to accept the Syrian version, would it mean that Israel was going to return the Golans wholly?

Eventually, owing to the US intermediary efforts, Syria and Israel resumed the negotiations on peace, interrupted in 1996, in Washington on December 14-15, 1999. The negotiations were based on the principle "land in return for peace". At this tripartite meeting it was arranged to hold the first phase of the negotiations among the same participants in the USA in January, 2000.

On January 3, 2000, the negotiations between Syria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Farouk al Sharaa and Israel's Prime Minister E. Barak began in the settlement of Shepherdstown in the State of Virginia. From the start, because of disagreements in connection with the agenda, the negotiations were on the point of failing, and only due to the efforts of the US President and Secretary of State failure was prevented. US President Clinton five times in seven days visited Shepherdstown and had separate talks with Sharaa and Barak. After the negotiations, which yielded no result the American intermediaries presented the sides a draft agreement called "Framework of Peace between Syria and Israel". The leakage of information about the Draft agreement and the publication of the whole text in the Israeli daily "Haaretz" actually prevented it from being signed and "made it impossible for Syria to return to the negotiation table"⁵⁷⁶.

Why didn't Israel and Syria sign the Peace Agreement? Why didn't Assad hasten the peacemaking process learning that Rabin was willing to withdraw the troops from the Golans? Why were the Americans unable to persuade Syria though the former really wished peace to be established between Israel and Syria?

As for Syria's "sluggishness" in the peacemaking process, besides accounting for it by political and strategic considerations, it can also be explained by the fact that establishing peace with Israel posed real complications to official Damascus and would have extremely dangerous consequences in the internal political sphere.

First of all, it would alienate a great number of Ba'ath members who were state employees and for the reason of Zionist danger they were involved in military and bulky internal security systems.

Second, Syrian businessmen and liberals considered the conclusion of a peace treaty with Israel to be the beginning of opening to the West. Assad, naturally, could not help worrying about "perestrojka" which might undermine the bases of his governing system and result in the collapse of his power the way it had happened in the countries of Eastern Europe. There was also a perspective of Israeli economic rule in peaceful conditions, which could not but worry Damascus.

Much has been written about the fact that Assad, being the representative of the Alavite minority, was afraid of peace since it might endanger the role of his community in the country. There was also an opinion that the Sunni Muslims' (the majority of the population) hatred of the Alavies was so great that after coming to power they would severely revenge themselves on the latter. This can be easily refuted by the fact that in 1983, when Assad's health grew worse, a commission of six persons was formed. It included the top officials of the country all of whom were Sunni Muslims. In case of Assad's death the commission was to govern the country⁵⁷⁷.

Indeed no one can deny the Alavites' unlimited power in the key spheres – the security and military systems as well as in the Ba'ath leadership. But we think that Syria is rather a centripetal authoritarian Ba'ath state than a centralized Alavite mono-power. The main concern of the power in Syria is not the Sunni Muslims reaction to the Alavies but Islamic extremism of Ikhvan al-Muslimin that advocated against the principles of a

⁵⁷⁷ The Commission included Ministers of Defence and Foreign Affairs M. Tlas and Abdul Halim Khaddam, Chief of the Military Forces Headquarters Hikmet al-Shihabi. Assistant of the general Secretary of the Ba'ath National Leadership Abdallah al-Ahmar, General Secretary of the Regional Party Leadership Zuhair Mashariqa and his assistant Abdel Rauf Kasm. Van dam Nikolaos. The struggle for Power in Syria. Politics and Society under Assad and the Ba'ath Party.

⁵⁷⁶ "Al-Hayat", 09.01.2000, "Haaretz", 13.01.2000.

secular state. By the way, this kind of concern exists also in Egypt and other Arab countries in North Africa where the leader, are not from the minorities.

We do not think that the statement about Assad's unwillingness to establish peace, which was not in his favour for a number of strategic reasons, corresponds to reality⁵⁷⁸.

Syrian president wanted peace but it was to be based on the conditions proposed by him and the way he imagined it. No doubt, he had his own strategic considerations, his own calculations. Simply the matter should be regarded from the viewpoint what the negotiating and mediating sides expected him to do. If Assad did not come up to their expectations, it does not mean that he did not want to establish peace. Assad repeatedly stated his definite and determined standpoint towards the possibilities of establishing peace. His standpoint did not change; his foreign policy was characterized by consistency and invariability. It was always clearly understood. The question is that neither Israel nor the USA was able or was willing to meet Assad's definite demands, which, by the way, did not differ from the UNO resolutions and the demands of the international community fixed in other legal documents. One cannot one-sidedly blame only Syria for the failure of the peacemaking attempts.

Another reason for the fruitlessness of the peacemaking process was Israel's resistance, its maneuvering and the refusal of Israeli leaders to recognize the basics and principles of the peacemaking process, their refusal to carry out their obligations. The Israeli leadership stubbornly put pressure on the Arab side by building new settlements, expanding the ones built previously, inviting immigrants from different parts of the world and sending them to the occupied areas to settle down, refusing to withdraw from the Golans and retreating to the borders of June 4, 1967, declaring Jerusalem to be the "eternal" capital of Israel, declining the right of the refugees to return etc.

The Israeli leadership made skilful use of inter-Arab controversies and problems in order to postpone the final solution to the Palestinian conflict. The separation of Palestine from Israel "with a wall" cannot be a final solution. It can simply extenuate Israel's concerns about security; yet in the perspective, it cannot bring peace either to Israel or to the region for a long time.

⁵⁷⁸ Rabin, Barry. *The Truth about Syria*, p. 110

No doubt peace between Israel and Syria was in Washington's favour since it would stabilize the situation in the region, ensure the unimpeded export of Middle Eastern oil at convenient prices and promote furthermore isolation of Iraq and Iran. Attaching importance to Syria's regional role by the USA, the meetings of the Presidents of Syria and the USA, Clinton's visit to Damascus greatly promoted the development of bilateral relations and agreement on some regional issues.

However the "tough" standpoint of the US Congress, consisting mostly of Republicans, constantly limited the possibilities of the White House to pursue a flexible policy towards Syria. For instance, on May 20, 1993, 73 Senators sent a letter to the US President in which they severely criticized Syria for its rigid passport regime with regard to Jews, for supporting terrorism and not withdrawing its troops from Lebanon.

On July 1, 1993, Senator C. Riggles presented a draft resolution to the Senate in which Syria was charged with violating Taif Agreement in terms of which the Syrian forces were to withdraw from Lebanon by September 1992⁵⁷⁹. Syria did not answer it directly but it was answered by Lebanese Parliament by a unanimous decision, adopted on July 6, criticizing "US Congress for trying to interfere in Lebanon's internal matters and in the Syrian-Lebanese relations"⁵⁸⁰. The decision also read that Taif Agreement also envisaged the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from South Lebanon.

On January 1994, 36 congressmen of the US House of Representatives sent a letter to Clinton stating that the USA was going to keep Syria in the list of the countries supporting terrorism until "they got a definite proof that Syria had completely stopped supporting terrorist groups".

On November 19, 1994, the Chairman of Foreign Relations Commission of the Senate made a speech accusing Syria of lack of interest in the Arab-Israeli peacemaking process. He noted that Syria "was interested only in regaining the Golans and in the US economic assistance"⁵⁸¹.

On January 11, 1995, the Chairman of Foreign Relations Commission of the Senate again accused the Syrian authorities in bombing the American detachments in Lebanon in 1983 as well as attacking the plane

⁵⁷⁹ Congressional Research Service. *Syrian-US Relations*. May 3, 1995, Library of Congress, p. 13

⁵⁸⁰, 07.07.1993

⁵⁸¹ Congressional Research Service. *Syrian-US Relations*. May 3, 1995, Library of Congress, p. 13

of the Pan Am aviation company in 1988. The 140-th session of the American Congress carried it further, prohibiting any assistance to Russia if the latter continued delivering 12 countries (Syria included) materials for the production of mass destruction weapons. According to another decision Syria was included in the list of the countries posing a missile threat to the USA⁵⁸².

Thus, despite the relative détente of the 90-s Washington came to be unable to shed the characteristic features of "client-patron and rival client" still existing after the cold war was over. The USA was not able to work out such diplomacy that would promote Syria's further involvement in the regional processes, which, in its turn, would strengthen Syria's counterbalancing role with regard to Iraq and Iran, leading it gradually out of regional isolation.

With respect to establishing peace the USA did not manage to offer definite security guarantees to Syria and Israel, and to avoid the perspective of direct American presence in the Golans.

To hasten the conclusion of the agreement the USA could use economic levers towards Syria. Simultaneously, with the peacemaking process, the USA could have put forward three proposals that would have interested Assad and he could hardly have declined them. First, Washington should have offered to help with getting loans from international financial organizations. Second, it should have offered to deliver new technologies (computer, broadcasting and informational) to Syrian universities and research centres. Third, it should have offered its mediation to settle the problems of water, Kurds and other issues, existing between Syria and Turkey. Yet the United States missed all the afore-mentioned opportunities.

Worsening of Turkish-Syrian relations in 1998, when the two countries were on the brink of a military clash because of Damascus' support to Kurdish separatism, in particular, to the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) was a golden opportunity for Washington to carry out a mediating mission. Instead, threatened by the Turkish side, Damascus had to expel Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the PKK, from the country and make steps towards suspending the assistance to Kurds.

Turkey got what it wanted; strengthened its regional position and involved Syria in the circle of its influence. In the course of the following years what was going on in the Turkish-Syrian relations, particularly the

"honeymoon" of unprecedented rapprochement between Syria and Turkey, especially under Bashar al-Assad, testify to the above-said⁵⁸³.

Generally the obvious obstacles on the way to EU membership push Turkey "eastward" activating its Near-Eastern policy, especially toward Arab countries, which, at the same time, does not hinder the development of military, economic and political relations with Israel.

Many American researchers think that Turkey can play a more important role in the process of settling the Arab-Israeli conflict. At first sight Turkey's mediation in settling the relations between Syria and Israel, in 2008, seems to testify to the above-mentioned. Yet the inevitable Islamization of the country (that we witness today in the actions of the current Turkish authorities), establishment of close cooperation with Arab countries and Iran striving to become a transit centre of energy-carriers (Iraqi oil through Syria, gas from Egypt and Iran) are going to make the Turkish-Israeli tandem deprived of any perspective.

As for Turkish-American relations, they are going to have a hard time connected with the intervention of Iraq aiming at "solving" the Kurdish problem, rapprochement with neighbours – countries undesirable for Washington (Iran, Syria, etc.) as well as the inevitable recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the nearest future.

The peacemaking process in the Middle East which the USA had urged forward so energetically came to an end without any result, as Washington had overlooked Damascus' role and underestimated Syria's chances in the region. Strategic possibilities of the Syrian-Iranian cooperation did not become the object of detailed analysis.

After September 11 the struggle against terrorism which included the fruitless campaign of the USA and NATO in Afghanistan for a long time, intervention of Iraq, without getting the approval of UN Security Council, in order to overthrow S. Hussein's regime (no proof of the existence of mass destruction weapon was produced by the USA) made Washington's position in the Middle East rather rickety. Increase of anti-American sentiments even

⁵⁸³ Ռուբեն Կարապետյան. «Նոր զարգացումներ թուրք-սիրիական հարաբերություններում» Թուրքագիտական և օսմանագիտական հետազոտություններ, հ. 2, Երևան 2003, էջ 59. Rouben Karapetian. New Developments in Turkish-Syrian Relations. Turkish studies, Yerevan 2003, p.59.

⁵⁸² Ibid, p. 14

in "moderate" Arab countries is going, in the nearest future, to deprive the USA of the opportunity of any serious intermediary mission⁵⁸⁴.

The Arab world no longer trusts the USA as an unbiased and disinterested mediator. The "Hamas" government in Palestine elected by people through free and fair elections was not recognised by the USA and the West advocating democracy. In the course of time they will have to reconcile with it the way they had to do with PLO and its leader Y. Arafat whom they had regarded as a terrorist. But the question is what price will have to be paid by the Arabs and Israelis, by the region and the whole world.

I would like to remind that the responsibility of an intermediary mission in the Middle East was comprehended quite well even in the USSR, which was declared to be an "empire of evil" by the USA. In connection with Israel's intervention of Lebanon in 1982 the USSR leader, A. Andropov, said words, which sound quite up-to-date: "Today our friends suffered a defeat. We are not going to fight instead of them. Under the circumstances our participation in the peacemaking process will be considered by the Arabs and especially by future generations to be assistance to Israel to settle down in the occupied territories and to drive the Palestinians out of Lebanon. Will it do any good to the USSR to strengthen its position in the Middle East? I am sure it will not. If we are unable to change the course of events in the Middle East, by using force or other means, then we would rather remain faithful to our principles and not bind ourselves, under the banner of peacemaking, with doubtful deals that can be regarded as betrayal of the Arabs' just struggle against imperialism. And this is not a step towards isolation but rather maintaining our standpoint in principle with a historic perspective that will yield its results in the nearest future"⁵⁸⁵.

The End of Hafez al-Assad's Era: Syria Facing New Internal and External Challenges

On June 10, 2000, Syria's President Hafez al-Assad passed away. A significant period of Syria's modern history came to an end. Ruling the

⁵⁸⁴ The fruitless summit in Annapolis in 2007 was, perhaps, the last attempt of G. Bush's inglorious administration.

⁵⁸⁵ Гриневский О. Сценарий для третьей мировой войны. Как Израиль чуть не стал ее причиной, с.216.

country for 30 years, despite the strictly centralized system, Assad succeeded in doing away with political and religious dissensions and controversies "inside a multi-faceted country", organizing a 400-thousand efficient army, taking control of neighbouring Lebanon and providing his country with serious economic and foreign political achievements.

Analyses of Hafez al-Assad's power are controversial. It is out of the aim of this research to present the problems of Assad's activity, particularly those connected with his internal policy. They have been much spoken and written about.

Within the framework of the topic of this study it is necessary to sum up by stating that under Assad Syria became an important regional force, which was no longer the victim of its more powerful neighbours' (in particular Egypt's and Iraq's) rivalry as it used to be. Based on its importance, Syria began to play a leading role in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Establishing an authoritarian governing system Assad's administration prevented any manifestation of dissidence or dissimilar opinions inside the country, whereas "in matters of foreign policy it maintained democratic" approaches. For three decades Syria's Alavite leadership followed such a foreign policy, particularly in connection with the Arab-Israeli conflict, which met, at most, the sentiments of the majority of its population. That is the reason why Assad's foreign policy was characterized by consistency, continuity, and his standpoint towards the Arab-Israeli conflict was marked by invariability and determination. Assad's foreign policy was trustworthy (reliable) since Syria demonstrated its willingness to carry out international obligations (implementing what was provided by the agreement after the war of 1973 and preserving peace on the border), and Assad's pragmatism was manifested in his relations with superpowers.

Due to his exceptional ability of maneuvering Syria closely cooperated with the USSR, providing his country with Soviet extensive political, economic, military assistance without turning into Moscow's "subject" either ideologically or its foreign policy. Assad's independence from Moscow in internal and external political matters, vital for Syria, deserves deep respect. His policy towards détente with the West in the 90-s and his decision to join the anti-Iraqi alliance and participate in the war against Iraq testify to Assad's flexibility in the sphere of foreign policy.

All this greatly promoted the rise of Syria's reputation in the Arab world and strengthened its position internationally.

H. Assad's death deprived international community of a serious chance of establishing peace between Syria and Israel, solving the Palestinian problem, which would result in establishing universal peace. Establishment of peace after long-lasting hostility and confrontation requires "courage" which could be demonstrated only by Assad from the Syrian side.

The problem of power shift had existed in Syria since the end of 1980-s when active steps were made to involve Assad's elder son Basil in the ruling system as a probable successor. Unlike his brother Bashar, Basil had chosen military career and as a member of the Chief Headquarters headed the Republican Guard, a select military sub-unit. By the time he was killed in a car crash in 1994 he had got in personal contacts with a number of representatives of the young generation of Lebanese political leaders. He also enjoyed a strong support in the armed forces as well as in the security and internal systems. His activity in providing security in Lebanon "had created a positive image for him especially owing to his active struggle against drug traffic and cultivation of hashish".⁵⁸⁶

His unexpected death again put forward the successor's problem on the political agenda. H. Assad's younger son Bashar, who was about to complete his education of an oculist, was quickly involved in the process of inheriting his father's power. In November 1994, Bashar Assad was appointed commander of a tank detachment. In January 1995 he becomes Major of the Presidential Guard and in July 1997, he was already a Lieutenant Colonel and was appointed Commander of the Republican Guard. Later in January 1999, Bashar was appointed Colonel of the Armed Forces Headquarters.

Like his brother, Basil, he was entrusted with the weightiest duty – management of the "Lebanese Parcel" in which he had already taken part before, during his first official visit to Lebanon in May, 1995. Since 1998 Bashar had been supervising Syrian-Lebanese issues under his father's personal control. Earlier the "Lebanese Parcel" had been managed by Vice Prime Minister Abdel Halim Khaddam and Hikmet Shihabi, Head of the Officer Staff. Through Bashar Assad's active "mediation" General Lahoud was elected Lebanon's President and Hoss was appointed Prime Minister.

⁵⁸⁶ Perthes, Volker. *The Political Economy of Syria under Assad*, p. 268

This was a heavy blow for Abdel Halim Khaddam⁵⁸⁷ who definitely supported the tandem of Hrawi-Hariri.

Thus Hafez al-Assad had been preparing Bashar for succession since 1994. During that time he surrounded his son by faithful comrades-in-arms neutralizing possible opponents. Bashar's last appointment was that of Colonel of the Armed Forces Headquarters, the last appointment before his father's death and before acceding to power.

There had been plans for him to take up Vice-President's appointment on national security which had been vacant since February, 1998, after Bashar's uncle Rifaat was dismissed. But in order to get that post Bashar was to be included in the leadership of the Ba'ath Party. It was to be confirmed at the next congress of the Ba'ath Party. The congress was continually postponed and eventually was not held for two reasons. First the congress was to approve of and confirm the Syrian leadership's project of peacemaking with Israel. But it was impossible to realize the project as long as no mediatory proposal had been made on the basis of which it would be possible to define the conditions admissible for Syria. Second, there was no unanimity among the Syrian elite concerning Bashar Assad, and Hafez Assad's manner of acting excluded any haste and immature decisions.

Though Assad publicly stated "he was not preparing Bashar for a successor"⁵⁸⁸ his son was actively getting ready for his future role. In the first half of 1999 he took part in a number of meetings, both personal and of state significance. On February 25, 1999, he visited Amman to offer Prince Abdullah his condolences on the occasion of King Hussein's death. Bashar was given a most ceremonious welcome appropriate for a top dignitary. He also participated in the private meetings of H. Assad with Khattami (May 9) and with Abdullah, Saudi Crown Prince (June 3), as well as meetings with the Lebanese leadership and opposition, the latter being within the framework of his functions.

We can definitely state that already in 1999 Bashar was actively involved in Syria's foreign policy. Work was under way to create a positive image of Bashar as champion of economic reforms which would ensure the

⁵⁸⁷ In 2005 he fled from Syria and sought asylum in Paris accusing Bashar of carrying out Lebanon President R. Hariri's assassination.

⁵⁸⁸ Мир глазами президента Хафез Асада, с. 211

assistance of EU countries⁵⁸⁹ and big businessmen⁵⁹⁰ who were in close contact with the country's elite.

After Assad's death the article of the Syrian Constitution, stating that any citizen not younger than 40 could become President, was hurriedly changed enabling 35-year-old Bashar (born in 1965) to get the high post.

The first years of Bashar's power have been dealt with in the book by Eyal Zisser who analyses the reforms, the causes of their failure, Syria's foreign policy quite objectively and in every detail⁵⁹¹. Since the present research is chronologically limited by the year 2000, i.e. H. Assad's death, we will enlarge on some important issues most succinctly.

He faced a number of challenges in the spheres of internal policy and economy, of which liberalization and strengthening the country's economy and the problem of combining it with strict state control were priorities. Some experts even began discussing the "Chinese model" in Syria. In September, 2000, the Ba'ath Party decided to allow the activity of private banks. It was also proposed to found a stock exchange, to discuss the law concerning bank secrets as well as to simplify and facilitate the process of foreign deals and transfers with foreign currency.

Bashar made definite steps towards widening political liberties inside the country. In November 2000, 600 political prisoners were released from Syrian prisons. B. Assad announced that he supported multi-candidate presidential elections after his term of office was over in 2007. The Syrian authorities adopted a more tolerant posture towards the activity of the newly-founded Human Rights Committee that advocated widening of human rights and civil liberties. For the first time in the last 50 years the publication of a non-governmental newspaper was allowed. To bridge the gap between the administration and people and to put an end to the vicious practice of ruling the country on the basis of personality cult, Bashar ordered to remove all his pictures from the streets and other public places. He also made another important step by allowing the use of the Internet and mobile phones.

⁵⁸⁹ To conclude a treaty on Associating Syria-EU the EU insisted on the necessity of reforms.

⁵⁹⁰ Syrian businessmen gradually, though slowly, took more seats in the country's Parliament and played a role in social life. Their appeals for reform grew more and more frequent.

⁵⁹¹ Zisser, Eyal. Commanding Syria. Bashar al-Asad and the First Years in Power. I.B. Tauris, London, 2007

In the first 6 months of his power Bashar undertook a kind of "perestrojka" which, however, did not last long; Instead of deepening and developing the reforms, growing the seeds already sown in the Syrian society, all of a sudden, he prohibited all the civil and social movements, discussion groups, supporters of democracy were arrested. "Damascus spring" was over⁵⁹².

Bashar al-Assad referred to the same old substantiation that had been circulating in the country for years: in a situation when Syria was at war with the USA and Israel it was not permissible to create an atmosphere of instability and disobedience that split up the unity of the people and obstructed the operation of the state system thus weakening Syria's position in the struggle against the common enemy. After R. Hariri's assassination and withdrawal of the Syrian forces from Lebanon strongly urged by the international community, being completely isolated in the international field, Bashar suspended all the democratic reforms.

It is quite logical that Bashar continued his father's standpoint and policy in the matters concerning peacemaking with Israel and settling the Palestinian problem. No retreat from the major prerequisite of making peace with Israel: withdrawal of the Israeli troops up to the borders existing by June 4, 1967. "The problem of regaining the Golans is the key item in the list of our national priorities", declared Bashar.

In comparison with his father Bashar is different in his position and reputation inside the country, in the depth and geography of his international contacts, in the quality and level of his relations with the USA.

Bashar al-Assad proved to be under extreme international pressure conducted by the USA. Prospects for cooperation with European countries, particularly with France, are bleak, since the latter accuses the Syrian regime of R. Hariri's assassination and of the chaotic internal political situation in Lebanon.

The cooperation Iran-Syria-Hamas-Hezbollah worsened Damascus' relations with two major Arab countries, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Though B. Assad made some steps towards activating Syria's regional policy in the

⁵⁹² For detailed information about the failure of the reforms as well as for citizens' evidence, their applications and letters see George, Alan. Syria: Neither Bread Nor Freedom. Zed Books, London, 2003

direction of Iraq and Turkey he did not succeed in splitting the international isolation of the country.

Surprising as it may seem, Israel is most of all interested in making peace with Syria, being well aware of Damascus' internal and external vulnerability, confrontation of Fath and Hamas in Palestine, the threat posed by Iran's nuclear project "to Israel's survival". Yet as some Israeli top diplomats informed me during meetings on various occasions, Washington objects to contacts with Syria. Having declared the project of creating a state of Palestine before Bush's term of office is over Washington does not want to endanger the above-said project by a Syrian-Israeli agreement. The USA also fears that the Syrian-Israeli direct contacts could result in losing its control of the developments in that important part of the Near East. Other considerations are also likely to exist. Anyway the reasons are not only the terrorist nature of the regime and violation of human rights, nor are they the accusations of Hariri's assassination and cooperation with Iran. The price of peace is incomparably higher than all these, especially if we consider the fact that there is no unanimity in the US political elite with respect to the US policy towards Syria. At the same time no one doubts that making peace with Syria will create a serious atmosphere of security for Israel and will enable the situation in Palestine to stabilize.

However peace will not be established between Syria and Israel until US policy towards Syria is changed. Peace will not become reality if pressure on Syria continues. Syria's withdrawal from Lebanon exhausted Bashar's possibilities of compromise and peacemaking with Israel without putting his own power at stake. That is the reason why his posture and oratorical pathos have grown more anti-Israeli. More often than his father Bashar refers to the necessity of securing the Palestinians' rights, to the creation of a State of Palestine with Jerusalem as its capital and to the issue of Palestinian refugees' return.

In an international atmosphere unfavorable for Damascus, considering possible internal political developments, Bashar Assad is least of all concerned about making peace with Israel. Damascus' standpoint towards the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict cannot be changed. Moreover, anti-Israeli and anti-Western sentiments and an appropriate policy are one more powerful means for Bashar to consolidate his forces and to strengthen his power.

The more Syria is driven "into a tight corner" by the West, the more unyielding and rigid its standpoint will be towards the key issues of foreign policy that cause so much anxiety to the USA and its allies.

We witnessed the fact of suspending all the economic and political reforms initiated by Bashar soon after he came to power. And this happened after the USA invaded Iraq, R. Hariri was assassinated, the Syrian troops left Lebanon, and the pressure on the Syrian administration increased in a situation when the country's international isolation was deepening. Bashar was compelled to suspend all the reforms.

Whatever the process and direction of the developments be, Syria will remain the main factor in maintaining the correlation of forces and providing security in the Middle East. Indeed, we can hardly expect a large-scale war to break out between Syria and Israel. Yet without Syria it is impossible to stabilize the situation in Lebanon and Palestine.

It is still early to consider Syria to be "off side". The key to resolving a number of issues lies in Damascus. In case Syria is left out of the peacemaking process and is ignored there will be constant instability in the region with occasional conflicts with Syria's indirect participation. It is impossible to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation by changing Syria's leadership, by putting pressure on it and by isolating it from the peacemaking process.

No doubt, the possibility of the ultimate settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict will depend upon the policy Syria follows, and normalization of Syria's relations with Israel.

Afterword

The 21-st century began with fearful terrorist acts in New York and Washington on September 11.2001. In answer to them the USA waged war against terrorism which outgrew US and involved almost all the countries and first of all the Middle East.

The war against terrorism resulted in important international developments that can have fatal consequences for mankind's future. It undermined the bases of the international order formed after World War II and greatly affected the Muslim world and, particularly, the Arab world politically, economically, morally and psychologically.

The struggle against "al-Qaida patronizing international terrorism", begun in Afghanistan, was perceived by most Arabs as struggle against Islam. The US administration stated publicly every now and then, that it was inadmissible to identify Islam and terrorism, but these statements were unable to appease the anxiety of the Arab and the whole Islam world.

Yet, when the war of the USA was transferred from Afghanistan to Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime, the Arabs started to regard it as war against the Arab world. Iraq is part of the Arab "umma" (motherland). The Iraqi people's depravities and victims in the course of the war could not be justified by the Arab street.

Common Arab people considered the Iraqi leader "to be one of them" despite all his negative features and the crimes committed by him. That is the reason why Saddam's trial and public execution aroused rather humiliation and hatred towards the USA than any feeling of justice. The US act of overthrowing the regime and coercing its power was perceived by the Arab world, having covered a long way of colonization, as return to the bygone era. The USA turned into the biggest and sole colonialist country in the 21-st century.

Instead of eradicating terrorism, its causes and circumstances stimulating it the Iraqi war violated correlation of forces in the region and created a new military-political situation in the Middle East.

The "punitive" war waged by the USA did not make the region and the world more secure, moreover, the Arab world split and grew weaker because of it. The USA did not gain anything from the war; on the contrary, it was ultimately deprived of any chance to control the developments or to

influence them in some way in the region. What happened in the Arab world testifies to the aforementioned: Palestine's splitting between " Hamas" and "Fatah", the prospect of Iraq's division, instability in Lebanon, Turkish invasion of Iraqi Kurdistan, uncertain future for Afghanistan...

One of the possible serious threats posed to stability in the Middle East and in the world will be the expansion of the confrontation between the Shia and Sunni Muslims, a confrontation that could erupt in Iraq or Bahrain then transcending to the most dangerous area of the world in Pakistan as well as in India. The magnitude and consequences of that conflict for the world should never be underestimated.

Iran gradually gained leading role in the region through Iraqi Shiites, Lebanese "Hezbollah" and Palestinian " Hamas". This new role of Iran causes anxiety not only to Israel and the USA but also to the Arab world.

International community is greatly concerned about Iran's nuclear project. If Iran obtains nuclear weapons, further nuclearization of the region will be unavoidable. Already a number of Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, Morocco) have declared their intention of using nuclear energy "for peaceful purposes". Time will show how Washington will coop with this aspect. Anyway time is working in Teheran's favor.

With new Administration in US after withdrawal from Iraq and in near future from Afghanistan, the chances of direct military operations against Iran are equal to zero. After the Taliban and Saddam Hussein "had been gone away" by military operations, the world did not at all become a safer place, despite the US President's promises, did it?

It is difficult to imagine the consequences if the countries of the region successively obtain nuclear weapons. It will in no way have a restraining influence as it did in the years of cold war, and owing to it peace and stability were preserved in the world.

Having accumulated a critical mass of hatred and misery, giving birth to terrorist suicide-bombers, the Middle East may bring the world to the brink of the third and, most likely, the last war in the history of mankind.

Israel and Syria bear their own part of responsibility for preventing the process of such historic developments.

Both of these countries most seriously realize what the aftermath of the aggravated situation in the Middle East will be, and what influence the unrestrained actions of the extremist forces can have on them.

The peace agreement between Israel and Syria will be the only possible way towards lasting peace in the region. Israel should offer the hand of peace to Damascus, especially when Arab Revolt of 2011 created completely different unpredictable geostrategic environment for Israel. The policy toward Syria followed by the USA and Israel, in its turn, will condition, to a great extent, Damascus' home policy.

Unfortunately previous US administrations came to be incapable of realizing the imperative of peace between Syria and Israel and its consequences for the region. Washington did everything to isolate Syria and not to allow Israel to follow the only logical policy, i.e. to resume the peacemaking negotiations with Syria. US failed to weaken the positions of Iran, "Hamas" and "Hezbollah" in the region, by patronizing and guaranteeing the establishment of peace between Syria and Israel.

The peacemaking process in the region should start from Syria after which there would be appropriate conditions to solve Palestine's problem. It will be possible to achieve just settlement of Palestine issue and establish *lasting peace* in the Middle East only by concluding a Syrian-Israeli peace treaty. To act the other way about, i.e. to create "a state" of Palestine leaving Syria no choice and thus coerce it to agree with Israel on conditions convenient for the latter will not do. Damascus always envied any Palestinian-Israeli rapprochement. Leaving Syria after the Palestine will lead to strengthening anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiments in the country which will be felt marginalized and left out of general Arab-Israeli settlement thus giving Iran of another chance of interfering in the Middle Eastern internal matters through Syria.

Supporting the change of regime in Damascus will not be so easy to realize. Internal disturbance and instability will create real possibility of another regional war between Syria and Lebanon from one side and Israel from another with possible wider participation of main players of the region Turkey and Iran.

P.S. At the moment of preparing this book for publication the developments in the Middle East took dramatic turn. The inability of the long term rulers in the Arab world to address effectively the raising demands for justice and fair social distribution, employment and empowerment of its educated youth created the chain of revolutions which will result in the opening of the new era in the history of the Arab countries and establishment

*a new form of democratic governance either moderate Islamic or secular. Arab world stand before new historical choice. Transformation will be difficult and painful. It will differ from country to country but the historical wisdom possessed there will help the Arabs to find **their own** way ahead, different from the one that designed in other places far away from the region.*

Syria could become the most bloodiest and the gravest case because the application of the same tactics and policies which worked in different countries of the Arab East will never work in Syria due to the different situation on the ground: loyalty of the army to the president, strong support of the majority of the Syrian population to the current leadership, lack of the unity and coordination among Syrian opposition forces and their complete dependence from outside financial and material help, religious and sectarian divide existing in the country, conflicting interests of the main regional players Turkey and Iran, as well as Israel's deteriorating relations with Turkey and obvious widening distrust and gap on regional affairs between Tel Aviv and Washington, differences between the Arab world, eventual unwillingness of international community to create additional problems at time when there are so many unresolved economic and political problems exist within their frontiers.

Syria is too important for the future geopolitical realignments of the region and stakes are too high there to talk about easy and speedy solutions. The future of the whole region is decided in Syria because it is the crucial country which keeps the balance between two regional powers –Turkey and Iran. Only after regime change in Syria, Turkey could be able to claim the regional leadership by cutting Teheran's ability to influence the regional-Arab developments through Syria. That is why Turkey is so keen to facilitate the regime change in Damascus by all means...

But the biggest question which still remains today to be answered is: What will happen after the regime change in Syria, what is next? Iran.....

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Mass media

a/ in Arabic

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| 1. تشرين | 22. الكفاح العربي |
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| 18. الحياة | 39. الدفاع |
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| 20. الجريدة | 41. النهار العربى والدولى |
| 21. الكفاح | 42. المستقبل |

b/ in English

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|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 43. "Foreign Affairs" | 53. "The Washington Post" |
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c/ in Armenian

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76. Մոլորակ
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79. Հայրենիքի Ջայն
80. Գանձասար
81. Երեկոյան Երևան
82. Ազդակ
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d/ in other languages

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