CHAPTER V
CHAPTER V
THE ROLE OF THE ARAB OIL IN THE US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST DURING PRESIDENT CARTER'S PERIOD

In the early 1977 there were several indications to show that the new President of the US was going to pursue a different policy from that of his two immediate predecessors. It appeared that President Carter desired to avoid confronting situations and to follow a policy of accommodation in international relations. He desisted from adopting interventionist posture on many occasions. His administration supported non-military actions in the face of Soviet and Cuban gains in Ethiopia, Angola, Afghanistan and South Yemen. He declared his intention to withdraw the US troops from South Korea and of negotiating a new Panama Canal treaty with the Republic of Panama. He was deeply attached to the concept of strategic arms limitations. He stressed on different occasions on the principles of human rights and on United State's moral leadership in the world. He believed, according to Dan Oberdorfer, in the idea that the US was not having the ability to intervene in "internal political structure of any nation... unless the US wanted
to get another Vietnam going". During the Carter administration the problems of the Middle East had considerably drew the attention of the US policy makers. Carter himself had admitted in 1982 that he "had spent more time on (the Middle East) issue than any other". As a President of the US, he was much concerned about the energy problem, the promotion of human rights principles and good relations with the developing countries. In his memoirs he mentioned that "the oil question replaced the USSR and anti-Communism as Washington preeminent concern". Arab's oil diplomacy perhaps swayed the Carter's administration more than it did to any of the previous US administration. It was argued that members of the Carter administration knew will that the US was facing an energy crisis and that they have to explore alternative sources of energy, but the Congress was unwilling to support such activities because of non feasibility of such programmes. The Carter administration was lift with no choice than to appease Arab oil-producers.

2. Ibid.,
4. Ibid., pp.277-278.
When the Carter administration assumed office, it faced in the Middle East a continuing Arab-Israeli dispute, a temporary ceasefire in the Lebanese civil war, the growing influence of the Arab oil-producers in the world and the persisting tactical differences with the Soviet Union over the means to solve the outstanding problems of the Middle East.

CARTER AND CAMP DAVID AGREEMENTS

The Carter administration took major new steps in the Arab-Israeli dispute, based on the assumptions that a rapid solution of the conflict was desirable given the danger it posed to the US interests, that direct external pressure from the US was required to bring about a settlement, that such pressure should be aimed more pointedly at Israel than in the past, that a comprehensive approach which dealt with the most intractable of the issues - Palestinian self-determination and the role of the PLO - was preferable to the step-by-step approach of Kissinger and that the Soviet Union should be provided opportunity to co-operate in a settlement, as it was felt that no tangible settlement could be arrived at by excluding the Soviet Union.

Carter administration sought new initiatives in solving the Arab-Israeli dispute through a comprehensive scheme that attempted to deal with each major party involved and each major issue. Initially Carter tried to achieve a comprehensive settlement through a Geneva Conference with the participation of all the parties. As a part of that effort, he took certain new steps in trying to solve the Palestinian problem. He declared in March 1977 in Clinton, Massachusetts, that the Palestinians are entitled to a homeland, and that Israel eventually must return captured Arab territory. In August, Carter approved a law which facilitated PLO members to visit the United States. There were also reports that President Carter used a number of prominent Americans to hold dialogues with the visiting PLO members. This sudden change in the US foreign policy in the Middle East perhaps animated Heads of Governments of the European Community to issue a statement on June 29, 1977 calling for a Palestinian homeland. And the Carter statement regarding his intention to abandon Kissinger's step-by-

step approach in favour of a comprehensive settlement which would take into consideration the Soviet Union's role was well received by the Arabs, including the PLO, but was opposed by the Israelis. Commenting upon the early Carter's approach to the Middle East issues on March 17, 1978, the Syrian Ambassador to the US said:

"An American administration had finally focused on the core of the Middle East problem and had begun to approach it clearly and publicly, in a manner consistent with the concept of openness which Mr. Carter promised during his campaign... The President of the United States called for an idea which, after all, is based on the same United Nations resolution which established a State for the Israelis."

A few US scholars also supported the Carter administration's policy. William E. Griffith wrote:

"The Middle East is the most crucial foreign-policy problem that faces the Carter administration. It directly affected the economic fortunes of every American. If we fail to seize the diplomatic opportunity that presents itself now, a fifth war will surely erupt in the Middle East. The Israelis will almost certainly win... The Arabs, in turn will retaliate against us as Israel's only ally, by shutting off our supply of oil once again."

---


The new policy of the Carter administration was an important issue in the May 1977 elections in Israel. The Israelis voted to power for the first time Menachem Begin, the leader of the terrorist organization, Irgun Zavi Leumi, during, the British Mandate, who had been opposing ever since the creation of Israel any move to give up any territory occupied to the Arabs. He was the direct legitimate heir to Jabotinsky's Revisionist leadership which had always stood for an Israel that included not only all of Palestine but also the lands east of the Jordan River comprising the present-day Jordan. Thus, for the new Israeli Prime Minister, withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories would be a denial of his entire life's work. In all probability he was voted to power to pursue such a policy. The Israelis thought that Begin would oppose strongly than his opponent from the Labor Party, Carter's pressures on Israel to adopt a more flexible policy towards Arab territorial demands.

Soon after his election as Prime Minister, Begin announced that the withdrawal provisions of the UN resolution 242 would apply only to the Sinai and not to the West


12. Ibid.,
Bank and Gaza Strip. He also announced that his government would increase the settlement in the West Bank and Gaza. The US-Israeli relations strained further especially after Carter announced that he would oppose any new arms sales to Israel.

In the US, the leaders of major Jewish organizations supported the Begin government with discernible apprehension because they knew that Begin's strong support for the annexation of the occupied Arab land to the state of Israel was mainly for religious rather than security reasons and that it would be hard to explain Begin's desire to possess the occupied land to an American public who are anxious for peace in the Middle East. They communicated to Carter administration by various manners that the new Israel Prime Minister should be given a change not only to explain his stand to Washington, but also be permitted to have direct negotiation with the Arab countries and that the new administration should not confront him with any ready made American solution.


July 1977 was a turning point in US-Israeli relations. The media projected an image that Begin's visit to Washington and his discussions with President Carter were successful. President Carter expressed his eagerness for an early settlement to the Arab-Israeli dispute and Prime Minister Begin asked for less US involvement.

In the meanwhile, the Carter administration was ahead with a comprehensive solution to the Middle East issues. It issued a statement supporting Palestinian participation in a peace negotiation, a statement that even the PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat hailed as a "turning point" and a "positive step". In an attempt to bring the parties together for the purpose of achieving a settlement of the conflict, Carter administration at first sought to pave the way for holding a Geneva Conference to be attended by all the concerned parties with the US and the Soviet Union serving as co-chairmen. As a part of this undertaking, a joint Soviet-American Communique was issued, in which the US for the first time accepted the phrase "legitimate rights of the Palestinians", which until then was viewed as a code in Israeli diplomatic parlance for displacing Israel with a Palestinian state. The communique set out a basis for a

peaceful settlement and specified the terms under which they could co-chair a Geneva Conference and inviting the representatives of the Palestinian people. It advocated normal peaceful relations on the basis of mutual recognition of the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence. It also suggested a role for Soviet and American guarantees as part of any settlement.

The idea of including the Soviet Union in the Middle East peace process was criticised in the US Congress and by the US media as it was considered a new dangerous venture. 150 Congressmen signed a letter criticising the Joint Communiqué with the Soviets. Both the Israelis and the Jewish community in the US strongly rejected the possibility of a US-Soviet condominium in the region. The international attention was focussed on the new US-Soviet initiative. But in the Middle East, issues developed quickly changing the course of events. It was reported that in July, Begin was informed by his intelligence service of a Libyan-inspired plot to assassinate President Sadat. Subsequently, Begin sent one of his intelligence officers to pass the information directly to the Egyptians at a secret

17. Ibid.,
18. Ibid.,
19. Ibid.,
meeting in Morocco. As a result, the Egyptians caught the plotters red-handed. Subsequently both Egypt and Israel agreed for a September meeting in Rabat, Morocco, between Moshe Dayan and one of President Sadat's most trusted aides. On November 9, President Sadat said before the Egyptian Parliament that he was "ready to go to the Israeli Parliament itself to discuss peace." The Egyptian Foreign Minister, Ismail Fahmy, submitted his resignation in the following day protesting against this statement. The Israel issued an invitation to President Sadat to address the Knesset. On November 19, 1977, President Sadat landed at Bon Gurion International Airport and on the same day he met with the Israeli Prime Minister Begin and addressed the Israeli Knesset.

The situation in the region continued to proceed down rapidly and in an attempt to revoke the peace making initiative or at least control the direction in which the Egyptian President appeared to be following, the Israeli Prime Minister visited Washington in December and announced his plan for a settlement in the West Bank according to which the West Bank was to be given autonomy, but continue

to be under the Israeli control. President Carter described Begin's plan as a good beginning. However, Sadat was disappointed; his comment on the plan was that he was "personally embarrassed". He added that "a chill seemed about to envelop the US-Arab relations", as the plan did not fulfill the Arab aspiration.

In February 1978, President Sadat visited Washington and met President Carter and other prominent members of the US Congress. One and a half months later, the Israeli Prime Minister Begin visited Washington and met President Carter and some members of the Congress. After Begin's visit a US official was reported to have said:

"It was a turning point for us. When Begin left, everyone was frustrated, not just in the White House but on Capital Hill. He left behind heavy footprints and a lot of frustration. That's the first time I saw a break in the solid support base for Begin on the Hill".

---

24. Ibid.,
Indeed, one can notice a turning point in Israel's influence in the US Congress. After Begin's visit, the pro-Israeli forces, for the first time in history, could not secure a congressional voting for a bill seeking military and financial support for Israel.

Subsequently, Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff one of the strongest supporters of Israel visited the Middle East. In Saudi Arabia he met some important Saudi Ministers and they were anxious to strengthen Saudi-American ties. He found that the Saudis were willing to co-operate in the Peace process. His visit to Syria was quite the opposite of his visit to Saudi Arabia. The Syrians refused to participate in Sadat's peace initiative. After his visit to Israel, Ribicoff returned to Washington well convinced that the new peace initiative of President Sadat would not succeed.

By mid-summer 1978, the Sadat peace initiative had almost came to a halt. President Sadat refused to conduct future talks with the Israelis and called up on the US to play a full role in the Middle East diplomacy. For Carter

27. Ibid., p.49.
administration, the situation in the Middle East was a very alarming — a total collapse of the new peace efforts might lead to another Arab-Israeli war which would be followed by an Arab oil embargo against the US and its allies and an end to whatever influence the US had gained in the Arab World since 1974. Therefore, it seems that Carter decided to call for a meeting at Camp David, US, between Sadat and Begin in September, despite opposition from his bureaucracies, which feared that the US leverages in the Middle East would be jeopardize if the peace negotiation failed. The US officials were pessimistic about the success of the talks because the views of Sadat and Begin appeared to be quite divergent.

Most of the Middle East experts did not expect any major gains from the Camp David meeting. In terms of personal and national interests all sides had high stakes in the meeting. Carter played a significant role by shrewdly handling the talks between Sadat and Begin. He suggested that the Sinai issue be separated from the West Bank and Gaza issue, which in turn was central to the success of the negotiations. He also assured President Sadat that the US would use its influence to get Saudi Arabia and Jordan to lend its support to the summit. In the end, two agreements were concluded, one was "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East" and the other "A Framework for the Conclusion of a
Peace Treaty between Egypt and Israel". The latter agreement called the two countries to seek completion of the detailed negotiations necessary before a treaty could be signed within three months. It included a phased Israeli withdrawal from all parts of the Sinai (including Israeli settlement and air bases) to be completed within three years of the conclusion of the treaty in return for diplomatic and commercial normalization of relations between Jerusalem and Cairo. In the case of the former agreement, "A Framework for Peace in the Middle East", disputes of interpretation arose almost immediately. The disputes emerged from the linkage between the two Framework Agreements, Israel insisted that the two agreements are separable, while Egypt insisted on the underling linkage between issues. According to this agreement, a five-year transition administration would be established by a committee consisting of Egypt, Jordan and Israel; West Bank and Gaza Palestinians might participate in the Egyptian and Jordanian delegations. The purpose of this committee was to arrange for full autonomy in West Bank and Gaza Strip by a Palestinian Administra-

28. Ibid., p.51.
29. Ibid.,
ation in these areas. The elected Administration Council was to replace the Israeli military presence. According to the agreement, the security during five-year transition period would be provided in three ways viz. (a) the Israeli armed forces in the West Bank and Gaza would withdraw to specified security locations, (b) a strong local police force would be established, which might include Jordanian, and (c) the borders would be patrolled by joint Israeli and Jordanian units.

The agreement stated that after the third year of the five-year transition period, negotiation would commence between the Egyptians, the Israelis, the Jordanians and the representatives of the West Bank and Gaza Administration Council to determine the final arrangements. In the meantime, negotiation would be conducted between the Jordanians, the Israelis and the Administrative Council representatives for drafting a final Jordanian-Israeli Peace treaty. At the end of the process, the agreements regarding the status of West Bank and Gaza Strip would be submitted for ratification by the elected representatives of the two areas.

On December 17, 1978, Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance ended his six-day visit to the Middle East and was disappointed to find that although the specified three

31. Ibid., p.29.
months had passed since the Camp David agreements were signed, no peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was in sight. The Egyptians accused Israel of zigzagging, while the Israelis charged that Egypt was evading the issue. Begin complained to Secretary Vance during his visit to the region that the US had abandoned the role of honest broker by siding with the Egyptian position. Begin complaint brought about clashes between the Israel supporters and Carter administration. Therefore, there were misunderstandings and mistrust first between Egypt and Israel, the second between Israel and the US and the third between the pro-Israel Americans and the Carter administration, which needs to looked into before initiating the peace process.

In March 1979, when the major differences between Israel and Egypt became apparent, Carter himself decided to go to the Middle East and use his good offices to hammer out a treaty. Secretary Vance wrote about Carter visit that:

"The President's decision was a breath taking gamble and an act of political courage. The unresolved issues made final agreement unlikely without further negotiating round. Failure in personal Presidential diplomacy could have sapped the administration's political strength as we were reshaping our security policy in South-west Asia and the Persian Gulf, as well as girding for a difficult ratification fight over the SALT Treaty".

During his visit to Egypt, Carter pointed that "only the path of negotiation and accommodation can lead to the fulfillment of the hopes of the Palestinian people for peaceful self-expression". "Camp David", he argued, "gave them an opportunity for participation and to turn the autonomy process into a means for achieving self-determination". In Jerusalem, Carter assured Israel of the US interest to keep Israel in a secure position. He told the Knesset: "I represent the most powerful country on earth. And I can assure you that the United States intends to use that power in the pursuit of a stable and peaceful Middle East."

Carter played a decisive role in bridging the gulf between Egypt and Israel. It is important to note here that Israel and Egypt became the largest recipient of the US's foreign aid. And the aid was used as a leverage by the Carter administration to bring about understanding between the two parties. As a result of the new understanding between Egypt, Israel and the US, the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty was signed on March 26, 1979 by President Sadat and


34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., p.10.
Prime Minister Begin and with President Carter as a witness in a televised ceremony before a huge audience in the White House Town.

According to this treaty Israel was to dismantle the Jewish settlements and return to Egypt the vast Sinai desert seized in the war of 1967, including the return of the Sinai oil fields within seven months. Israel was also to evacuate the coastal town of El-Arish within two months and pledged to give more freedom to the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Egypt on its part agreed to formally recognize her Jewish neighbor. The treaty did not contain any provisions regarding the return of West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights. However, it was hoped that once the Israelis were convinced of the peaceful intentions of Egypt they would eventually agree to give up these territories also.

For the Carter administration, the Arab-Israeli conflict posed at least two serious problems in the context of its global strategy of containing Soviet expansion. First, so long as the Middle East conflict persisted it is difficult to bring about the unity among the Arab States and integrate their resources, and installations to cater US and Arab interest. Second, escalation of any conflict in the region would easily jeopardise the flow of oil from the Middle East and draw US into a military confrontation with
the Soviet Union, since the Soviet would side with the Arabs. The consequence of such a confrontation would be devastating for the entire region, if not for the whole world. Also the maintenance of stability in the Middle East would keep the Soviet influence away from the region at a time when the Soviets were trying hard to have a hold in the region.

However, the Camp David talks and the subsequent Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty appeared to have recreated the anti-imperialist Arab Unity. Meeting at Baghdad in November 1978 under the leadership of Iraq, which was thrusting itself forward as the successor of Egypt and leader of the Arab world, the Arab countries decided to withdraw their Ambassadors from Cairo, if Egypt went ahead with the peace treaty with Israel, to suspend Egypt from the Arab League, and to invoke economic sanction against it. In April 1979, the second Baghdad conference was convened, i.e., after the signing of the Egyptian-Israeli Peace treaty. At the end of the meeting, the Arab countries decided to launch economic sanctions against Egypt, suspension of Egypt's membership in the Arab League, withdrawal of Arab Ambassadors from Cairo, and condemned the Egyptian-Israeli treaty and the US 's role in achieving it.

36. AL-Qadiesyh (Baghdad) (in Arabic), November 25, 1978.
Thus, the US was unable to gain any additional support for the Camp David accords in the Arab world. Instead, the Arab countries, including the Arab conservatives, formed a strong anti-Egyptian front.

Israeli withdrawals from Sinai desert went on in accordance with the Egyptian-Israeli treaty, although sometimes it appeared that Israel deliberately sought to provoke Egypt into renouncing the treaty before all of the Sinai desert was evacuated. On the other hand, Israel increased the number of settlement on the West Bank. The Arab opposition to Camp David led Carter administration to take a liberal stand towards the PLO as part of an effort to gain the Arab involvement in the peace process. The administration responded favorably in the summer of 1979 to an Arab proposal for a UN Security Council resolution which would reaffirm resolution 242 and 338. In the complex negotiations surrounding this initiative, the US Ambassador to the UN Andrew Young, without obtaining the prior approval of the US administration, met with the PLO representative at the United Nations. However, when this was revealed publicly, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance demanded that Young should resign, and Carter allowed him to do so in August.

Subsequently, the US prepared its own proposal for solving the problem of autonomy in West Bank and Gaza Strip. But the proposal was not agreeable to Israel on the ground that it was unnecessarily favoring the Arabs. Egypt also rejected the proposal because of its apprehension that giving autonomy quickly to the Palestinian in West Bank and Gaza Strip might slow the process of Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. Shortly thereafter the US voted for a UN resolution which condemned Israeli settlements in the occupied Arab Territories, including Jerusalem.

Egypt continued steadfastly insisting on the solution of the Palestinian problem. It was not willing to accept anything less than a meaningful self-government for the Palestinian residents on the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On the other hand, Israel was willing to concede to the Palestinians nothing more than some harmless municipal powers. Without the support of political actors in Middle East including the PLO, the Carter administration was not in a position to push the peace process. Moreover, the fall of the Shah of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan virtually ended any further efforts by the Carter administration to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute.
THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

When the Camp David talks were in progress and while the US was busy propping up Israel, one of the twin pillars of US policy in the Middle East, Iran, was shaken by the tremors of a strong Islamic revolution. The Shah regime, which was viewed as the safest ally of the US in the Middle East was overthrown and a new Islamic fundamentalist regime came to power. Soon after the oil boom, Shah of Iran embarked upon heavy industrial projects and he invested most of the oil revenue in the industrial sector. But the sudden shift from agriculture to industrial sector had several implications on the other sectors of the Iranian economy. For example, the agricultural production came down drastically and the agriculture import bill had increased. Also there was an influx of people from the rural area to the urban area and they were caught in an unemployment trap. His method of modernisation brought to surface fundamental contradiction between the western style of development and the traditional Islamic one. However, in conventional economic term the Shah's strategy was a successful one, but it also created situation like unemployment and financial difficulties which the regime could not cope with. Along with his industrial ambitions, the Shah was dreaming of a powerful Iran. He had the ambition of being the sole dominant power in the entire region. This led him to spent a
lot of money on military expenditure, leaving less money for development activities. It was estimated that Iran spent $11 billion on arms import in the year 1976 alone. It received the most advanced weapons invented in the United States. All in all, created a fertile ground for the Islamic revolution.

The Iranian revolution created disturbances and turmoil in the world oil market. Ayatollah Khomeini soon after he seized power, announced that Iran's future oil production would be two thirds of the pre-revolution level. Given the fact that Iran was producing six million barrel per day before the revolution, it meant that, the market lost two million barrel per day. This closed a sudden increase in the oil prices. What further pushed the price of oil during the Iranian crisis was the shift in the demand pattern of the Petroleum product in the world market. Table-1 shows the magnitude of that change.

40. Ibid.,
### TABLE 1
DEMAND PATTERN OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN THE MAJOR OIL CONSUMING MARKETS

*(in %)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Light ends</th>
<th></th>
<th>Middle Distillates</th>
<th></th>
<th>Residues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>30.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>44.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>33.6</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>31.4</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>109.1</td>
<td>120.3</td>
<td>112.9</td>
<td>131.6</td>
<td>168.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is clear that the demand for light and middle distillates increased subsequently relative to the demand for residues, especially in Europe and Japan. It had been estimated that only one-fifth of the OPEC reserves are light crude oil. And to neutralize the exhaustion of the light crude oil, Saudi Arabia temporarily enforced in March 1978 a decision stipulating that at least 35 per cent of the total crude oil export should consist of heavy crude oil. This

action and the fluctuating market situation together with the shortfall in Iran created the shortage of the required petroleum product in the market.

At the regional level, the Islamic revolution had tremendous impact on the Gulf States. This was reflected in the Kuwait-Saudi communique, following the Kuwaiti Crown Prince's visit to Riyadh, in which the two sides expressed their deep concern over the turmoil in Iran and its effect on the Gulf States. The Saudi concern was further reflected in the Crown Prince Fahd's statement in January 1979 for the Shah's regime, which he described was based "on legitimacy".

The Islamic revolution in Iran which expressed its aversion to the idea of political borders and to the concept of the one Islamic State, did not augur well for cordial relations between the Iranian revolutions and the conservative Gulf regimes. And what escalated the tension was Ayatollah Khomeini's declaration that the Islamic revolution in Iran was harbinger of world revolution for the "mustazafin", the oppressed and downtrodden all over the world, against the forces of the "Mustakbirin", the oppres-

Iran viewed the ruling conservative regimes in the Gulf as un-Islamic, corrupt and despotic, as well as functioning as US satellites states.

To propagate his religious and political teaching, Khomeini began sending personal religious envoys to the Gulf States. He appointed his son-in-law, Hajat al-Islam Abbas al-Mohri as the Imam of the Friday congregational prayer for the Shia Muslims in Kuwait. Subsequently, al-Mohri began politicising the religious sermons by attacking the rulers of Kuwait, till he was expelled along with some of his relatives, after being accused of encouraging anti-government activities. Al-Mohri's expulsion from Kuwait came after the Kuwaiti government had uncovered in January 1979 an arms depot in the suburb of the Kuwaiti capital, and arrested a group of individuals believed to be part of a large network of pro-Khomeini activists in the Gulf region. Bahrain also expelled Hojat al-Islam al-Hadi al-Mudarisi, after accusing him of being involved in anti-government activities.

44. AL-Nahar, August 23, 1979.


46. AL-Nahar, February 26, 1979.

What was more disturbing for the Gulf States was Iran's commitment to export its Islamic revolution to the entire Islamic world starting from the neighboring countries. In November 1979, for example, the Iranian Broadcasting Service, called upon the Gulf people to rebel and overthrow the reactionary, oppressive and anti-Islamic regimes in the Gulf. In October, 1979, President Bani Sadr himself made statement against the Gulf regimes when he characterised them as not being independent and serving as US satellites in the region. He pledged that Iran would support Islamic movements bent on the destruction of the Gulf regimes. Another Iranian leader stated that the Islamic revolution's aim was to propagate Islam. It wants "your salvation from despotism, colonialism imperialism and Zionism". Subsequently, Iran began utilizing the Shia community in the Gulf to overthrow the existing regimes. Bahrain and Saudi Arabia charged that Iran was helping the Shia community in their countries to overthrow the legitimate governments. Indeed, following the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in November 1979, and the anti-government Shia agitation in the eastern region of Saudi Arabia in December of the same year, Iran began exhorting


50. AL-Nahar, October 13, 1979.
the people to continue the revolution. In addition, it started broadcasting statements like "the Islamic Revolution of the Oppressed People of Arabian Peninsula", urging the people to overthrow the Gulf regimes.

The failure of the US to rescue the Shah regime and the US stand from the Islamic revolution affected the US influence in the region. The revolution not only overthrew a regime which was a close ally of the US and brought anti-American and anti-West regime, but also had a far-reaching impact on the conservative Gulf regimes, who began to increasingly show clear signs of distress and disenchantment with the US policy in the region. Saudi Arabia manifested its disenchantment with the US policy through press reports circulated in early 1979 which indicated the possibility of establishing Saudi-Soviet relations. Earlier in January, 1979, the Saudi Foreign Minister acknowledged the Soviet Union's role in Arab affairs when he stated: "The lack of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union does not mean that we do not recognize the Soviet Union role or the significant role it plays in world politics". On March 26, Crown Prince Fhad stated that, although Saudi Arabia had

51. Ibid., January 7, 1980.
52. Ibid., February 1, 1979.
ideological differences with the Soviet Union, this does not mean we should ignore the importance of the Soviet role in global politics.

In November 1979, when the Shah left for the US for medical treatment, the rival groups besieged US embassy in Teheran and held the American diplomats as hostages demanding the return of the Shah. This was another proof of the failure of the US policy in dealing with the revolt against the Shah. President Carter ruled out the possibility of using force against Iran in order to rescue the hostages. He felt that the crisis would not last long and could be solved by diplomatic means.

Carter’s response to the hostages crisis was in the form of appeals to the UN and to the European community and other allies for supporting an economic sanction against Iran, including the freezing of its assets. But when the Iranian government did not show any sign of compromise, the US tried a rescue attempt in April 1980.

However, the Iranian position had changed when the newly convened Majlis approved a new bargaining position on November 2. This sudden change in Iran’s position was due

to the internal stability, to the burden of Iran-Iraq war and to the hardship caused by the economic sanction. At the time Carter was laying down his office an agreement between Iran and the US was reached. According to this agreement fifty two hostages were released. The US was to return about $11 billion of Iranian assets frozen by the US government with only $5.1 billion actually going back to Iran, of the remainder, about $5 billion, Iran was to pay off loans for US Banks and another $1 billion was put in a special fund to cover claims by American companies. The US also promised not to interfere in the internal affairs of Iran and not to block any legal action by Iran through the US court system to try to regain the wealth of the Shah's family.

The economic sanctions and the freeze of Iranians account in the US banks created a serious panic among the Arab countries. They felt that such coercive and arbitrary action were quite unacceptable as they feared such punitive actions could be initiated whenever the US interests were at stake. Many economists and political analysts of these countries warned the private and public sector enterprises about the consequences of investing in foreign banks.
The year 1979 raised the suspicions and fears of the US administration about the crumbling positions in Iran and the possible repercussions of the Iranian revolution on the Gulf States and from the apparent delay in signing the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty. From the economic aspect, the US was facing with a combination of rapidly rising inflation and unemployment, coupled with rapidly falling economic activity. The reduction of Iran's oil production generated a negative impact on the rate of growth of the western allies of the United States.

This problematic situation had rectified response from the US officials. Senator Henry Kissinger, Director of the Council on Foreign Relations, who was described as a shadow Secretary of State and the invisible hand behind most of State Department decisions, was very particular about America's need to have military presence in the Gulf and in the Indian Ocean. Kissinger maintained:

"We cannot resign from the problem (of the Gulf security) by renouncing the role of policeman... It is a responsibility we cannot avoid. So we need a complex of policies. We need a visible presence of American power in the Indian Ocean, in part as a substitute for the declining Iranian power... We surely should not exclude it (military force) publicly though of course it can only be a last recourse".

55. The Economist, February 10, 1979, pp.35-36.
Kissinger stressed on the importance of completing the Egyptian-Israeli agreement in order to tackle the other problems in the region. He said "Until a few years ago an Arab-Israeli policy could act as a symbol of the American strategic and political dominance of the area. Now the Egyptian-Israeli agreement is an admission card to dealing with other even deeper issues". In fact, Kissinger, due to the Iranian crisis stated that the failure of Camp David talks would mean disaster to the US policy in the Middle East. He said "Under the present circumstances the failure of Camp David should be perceived as a sign that the US and all those who had bet on it were incapable of shaping events".

The appropriate response to the new situation in the Middle East, which was brought about by the fall of the Shah's regime, was a subject of debate in the various official forums in the United States. Doubts were expressed about President Carter's ability to act decisively in Middle East affairs from various groups. Rift was reported between Brzezinski's aides on the National Security Council and the State Department officials loyal to Cyrus Vance. This rift was out in open and became a subject of extensive commentary.

56. Ibid.,
57. Ibid.,
and gossip. However, there was a clear agreement that a total reassessment of the US policy towards the region was necessary.

It was realized that, regional forces could no longer be relied upon to maintain the safety of the vital oil flow. The Pentagon officials were interested to ensure the steady flow of oil from the region. Indeed, the aircraft carrier Constellation escorted by two cruisers, two guided missile destroyers, one conventional destroyer, and three support ships, left Subic Bay on the eve of the New Year bound to the Middle East. However, Constellation was soon ordered back and the US gave no reasons for that. The announcement of the US State Department's spokesman on January 12 of US formation of 12 Eagle F-15 jet fighters which was to fly to Saudi Arabia was meant to be a clear demonstration of US determination to protect the stability of the region from any upheaval.

It appears that, the most important concern for the US was the geopolitical implication of the fall of pro-American regime in a vital region to the US interest. On


January 6, Brzezinski, in a speech to the Foreign Policy Association, cautioned, that an "arc of crisis... along the shores of the Indian Ocean, with fragile social and political structure in a region of vital importance to (the US) threatened with fragmentation". He stated that "the resulting chaos could very well work out to the advantage of elements hostile to (US) values and sympathetic to (US) adversaries".

In some circles, the old Domino Theory was brought once more into play - after being dusted off - and was used to justify intervention aimed at blocking a chain reactions in so called sensitive regions. On January 17, James Schlesinger testifying before the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, cautioned that after the fall of Shah the balance of power in the Gulf region had changed against the US and the texture of strategic relationship in the pre eminent oil-producing region was in the process of change and that the US "will have to take steps to shore-up the nations around the Gulf". The Columnist Stephen Rosenfeld

61. Ibid.,
62. Marwan Bohyri, Arab Oil and US threats of Intervention, (in Arabic) op.cit., p.59.
63. Mideast Observer, January 15, 1979, p.3.

340
who was representing the powerful conservative and pro-
Israeli wing establishment) concluded that "The Persian
Gulf is now routinely bracketed with Korea as the place
where the United States must be ready to fight the 'half
war' or the 'one-and-a-half wars' for which it has planned
its forces since Vietnam". Regarding the diplomatic
implications, Rosenfeld stressed that

"The triumph of an unarmed mass movement over a
heavily armed regime linked closely to the United
States, has forced a rethinking of the uses of raw
military power - the client's and the patron's - in
civil conflicts... The old-style diplomacy involved fronting for military power. The new-style
diplomacy must anticipate and manage emerging
political currents".

Israel seized the opportunity created by the
Iranian crisis to prove that, with the fall of Shah, it
remained the only strategic ally of US in the region, and
therefore should be properly rewarded and conciliated.
Shamuel Kutz, Israel's former Information Director argued
that: "There is no nation in this area but Israel... which
can ensure a viable security doctrine for Middle East".

64. Stephen Rosenfeld, "The Uses of Power in the Persian
65. Ibid.,
He characterized his country as a crutch to the US in the region and said: "An unweakened Israel with room for manoeuvre is the only means in the final analysis, for ensuring the safety even of the Arabia oil fields".

However, the collapse of the Shah made the US to search for other possibilities. Therefore, Egypt's candidacy came as a substitute through whom US strategic power could be partially recovered in the region. Perhaps, the Iranian crisis provided a new urgency for the peace talks which was in the process between Egypt and Israel. It was reported that Begin has informed Canada's Conservative Party leader, Joe Clark, of Israel's anxiety regarding the existing situation in Iran, South Yemen, Ethiopia and Afghanistan and therefore stressed the need to resume negotiations with Egypt at an early date to resolve the issue. The shift in the Israel's stand appeared to be due to its fear that US would search for other alternatives, including that of giving more attention to Egypt, especially after the US decision to sell $8 billion of weapons to Egypt in the 1980s.

67. Ibid., February 16, 1979, p.7.
MILITARY THREATS AND THE DETERIORATION OF THE US RELATIONS WITH SAUDI ARABIA AND JORDAN

Though President Carter did not show any sign of threat to the Arab oil-producing countries in the first year of his Presidency, it was reported that he had issued a secret Presidential Directive on August 25, 1977 (which was leaked to the Press on March 1, 1978) calling for the preparation of an adequate strike force of several "light divisions" capable of rapid intervention in the Middle East, especially in the oil-producing areas of the Gulf. The first warning to the Arab oil-producing countries came on February 20, 1978, when Defence Secretary Harold Brown said in his address to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council, "Because the area is the World's greatest source of oil, the Middle East and the Persian Gulf cannot be separated from our security and that of NATO and our allies in Asia".

Perhaps, during the early months of 1978, such strong statement was aimed at influencing the Arab oil-producing countries to accept the new Sadat-Begin initiative, which was endorsed by President Carter. In fact, some

69. Ibid.,
70. Ibid.,
experts like A.J. Khouri and Paul Saba argued at that point that US policy was embarking on a Pax-Americana for the Middle East.

While the Carter administration at the initial stage was careful not to aggravate its relations with Saudi Arabia, other influential figures, especially in the Congress, wanted to initiate some action which might influence Saudi Arabia to change its stand. In December 1977, a report prepared by Senator Henry Jackson, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, and an enthusiastic supporter of both the Shah and Israel, suggested that the US should support the Shah against Saudi Arabia even to the extent of military intervention, if necessary. The report maintained: "If Iran is called upon to intervene in the internal affairs of any Gulf States, it must be recognized in advance by the United States that this role for which Iran is being primed and blamed cannot be assigned for Iran' carrying out an implied assignment". The report went on say:


"Historically the Persian Empire occupied a far larger geographical area than does present day Iran, when Persian leaders were strong their ambitions were great... as Iran's oil reserves peak and decline, across the Gulf, will be Saudi Arabia with plentiful oil reserves, enormous wealth and little to spend it on in terms of native population".

By mid 1978, it appears that Iran was viewed as unwavering pro-American strategic ally in the region by comparison with the uncertain Saudi regime. This is why some influential figures wanted to reexamine the US relation with Saudi Arabia.

By mid 1978 there were concern in strengthening the US position in the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean. Admiral Thomas Moorer, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1970 to 1974, called for intermittent deployment of two carrier forces to the eastern African littoral and Arabian Sea and conduct selected exercises inside the Gulf on a random basis. He argued that in the absence of American land bases in the region, the carriers would provide a visible presence and timely manifestation of United States resolve. And in the wake of Camp David talks

73. Ibid.,


75. Ibid.,
Senator Henry Jackson had called for a New Marshal Plan for the Middle East and partnership of unprecedented proportions between Israel, Egypt and the United States.

On October 5, 1978, Senator Frank Church warned Saudi Arabia to cooperate fully with the Camp David peace initiative. He said: "It is imperative... that we make clear to the Saudi government that our strategic concerns are mutual, that our interests are intertwined and, in the last analysis, it is the American security umbrella which shields the Kingdom". Thus, it appears that the US officials were suspicious about the Saudi Arabia's role in the region and that the only possible way to warn the Saudi government was in the form of military threat.

Perhaps, the beginning of 1979 was a turning point in US-Saudi relations. By the end of February the relations had reached its lowest ebb. The Saudi government was very particular about some of the action of Carter administration and of prominent Senators. In early February, Senator Frank Church, in his first major foreign policy statement as chairman of the Senate Foreign relations committee, selected

77. Ibid.,
the Jewish forum B'nai B'rith convention. In his speech he stressed: "It was necessary for the US to lay it on the line with the Saudi... and it was important that the Kingdom's resistance to the Camp David accords be neutralized by the US". Senator Church asked the administration for a review of the whole relationship with Saudi Arabia, including the proposed sale of F-15 planes, and for strong pressure to be applied on the Kingdom. In addition, he commissioned a special study entitled, "United States Foreign Policy Objectives and Overseas Military Installations" which called for the establishment of new US military bases in the Middle East under three possible conditions: (1) In Israel, Egypt or perhaps elsewhere in the region as a guarantee of an Arab-Israeli settlement; (2) by invitation of smaller states eager to thwart a "long-term threat from one or more of its neighbors"; and (3) in the event of a serious threat to regional security posed by another great power.

In the last week of February, two key members of the administration, Defence Secretary Harold Brown and Energy Secretary James Schlesinger, gave a clear indication of US determination to protect its vital interest in the

Gulf, even if necessary, by military intervention. Brown stated "we will take any action that is appropriate, including military force". And Schlesinger said: "The US must move in such a way that it protects those interests in the Gulf, even if that involves the use of military strength or military presence". The Saudi semi-official daily Al-Nadwa in a reply to the US threats maintained that "the Arab will succeed in borrowing foreign intervention in the area, and in preventing the international superpower club from practicing its favorite chess game, which it would like to transfer now to the Arab nation. We reject the turning of our territory into a sports ring, for world strategy".

By mid-February President Carter had sent Harold Brown in a mission to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt and Israel to find ways and means to protect the regional security in the wake of the Shah's fall and to persuade both Saudi Arabia and Jordan to join the Camp David talks. During his visit to Saudi Arabia, Brown had offered the establishment of US bases in the Saudi territory in return for a near-doubling of Saudi oil production (from 8.5 mb/d to 16 mb/d),

81. Ibid.,
82. AL-Nadwa, (in Arabic) (Mecca), March 8, 1979.
the increase in the purchase of US Treasury Certificates by Saudi Arabia and active support for the Camp David process. But Saudi Arabia rejected Brown's request for US direct participation in Middle East Security, and refused to support US efforts in the peace process. In mid-March 1979, the National Security Advisor, Brzezinski also failed to influence Jordan and Saudi Arabia to soften their opposition to the Begin-Sadat peace treaty. King Hussein accused the US of using arm twisting tactics to secure Jordan's acceptance of the Camp David peace process. Other top Jordan officials also made it clear that "Jordan does not agree with the recent US thesis that the Middle East is threatened by Soviet or radical Arab movements". Jordan insisted that the principal threat to peace in the Middle East emanated from the Israeli occupation of Arab land and its expansionist policy. Subsequently, the relations between Jordan and US deteriorated especially after US House of Representatives passed a resolution making future military aid to Jordan linked with Jordan's cooperation with the peace process.

Soon after South Yemen gained its independence, the National Liberation Front, the then undisputed authority in South Yemen began an efforts to extend its ideology to North Yemen. The "correction movement" as it was called which took place in 1968 in the South and the establishment of the national reconciliation government in the North in March 1970, put the two Yemens on incompatible terms. The new government in Sanaa tried to keep a neutral posture and maintained sufficient distance from Saudi Arabia in order to make possible a composition between the restive Shafies and the Zaidis Moslem sections of its society. On the other hand, the National Liberation Front government in the South wanted complete social reorganization in the North and an alignment with the socialist countries. This dispute led to border skirmishes and almost resulted in a war in 1972. However, the fighting ended with an agreement with the acceptance of non-intervention principles.

Nevertheless, South Yemen engaged on a systematic programme of enlisting fresh soldiers and training North Yemenis for committing subversive activities in the North. When President Ibrahim Al-Hamdi assumed power in Sanaa in June 1974, he made a genuine attempts to reach understanding with South Yemen. The Presidents of both Yemens met in
Cairo in October 1976, during the Arab League summit conference and assured that they would not support the revolutionary elements in each other's country. However, the improvement in North-South Yemen relations ended with the assassination of President Al-Hamdi on October 1977.

The new North Yemeni leader, Ahmad Hussein al-Ghashmi, showed no zeal in investigating his predecessor's assassination and patched up differences with the Saudi Arabia which had earlier opposed Al-Hamdi's conciliatory attitude towards the South Yemen. On June 1978, President al-Ghashmi was assassinated through a bomb carried in the brief case of an envoy from the South Yemen President Salim Rubay Ali. The murder of al-Ghashmi had an unexpected effect in South Yemen itself. The Yemeni Socialist Party was established and Abdel Fattah Ismail, a Marxist and hard line doctrinaire, came to power. The new regime in the South claimed that it was the legitimate power in both South and North Yemen. Subsequently, it started organizing and supporting North Yemenis to promote revolutionary ideas in the North in an attempt to unify both Yemens under its leadership.

On February 23, 1979, border clashes erupted between South and North Yemen. South Yemen accused the North Yemini armed forces of having attached South Yemini
territory in the region of Mukhayras and Beihan. On the other hand, North Yemen accused the South Yemen of having violated the integrity of its territory several times since February 20, 1979, by sending saboteurs supported by tanks. On February 26, South Yemen mounted a massive invasion of the North and advanced 30 miles into North Yemeni territory.

Without the help of the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries, South Yemen would never have carried out attacks on North Yemen. According to some statistics, there were 800 to 1000 Soviet personnel, between 500 to 700 Cubans, and more than 100 East Germans serving as military advisers in South Yemen at the time of the invasion. In early 1977, the report of Staff Survey Mission of the US Congress categorically warned that in the event of hostilities, it is expected that the Cubans would play a direct role much as they did in Angola. The report also stated that South Yemen's "superiority in numbers of troops is enhanced by an extensive array of Soviet armour, artillery,

85. AL-Ahram, February 26, 1979.
86. Ibid., February 27, 1979.
aircraft and other weapons. To offset this impressive (South Yemen) capability, a modernized (North Yemen) armed
force is essential".

Given the strategic significance of North and South Yemen's location along the Strait of Babel Mandeb and their proximity to the Gulf oil-producing countries, the US was left with no option but to take a solid stand on the existing conflict, especially after the US had received evidence that South Yemen's airfields had been used for reconnaissance missions and were a transit point for supply of arms to Ethiopia in 1977-1978, and crews serving on Soviet ships in the Indian Ocean were also passing through Aden.

The developments in North and South Yemens gave the US an opportunity to prove its creditability to the Arab conservative oil-rich countries, after the US failure to influence the developments in Iran. Therefore, the Carter administration after preliminary agreement between

88. Ibid.,

the Saudis and the US Defence Secretary during his February visit to the Middle East, speeded up the delivery of old arms orders to North Yemen totaling $139 million dollars and subsequently President Carter ordered an immediate aid to North Yemen worth about $400 million without waiting for US Congressional approval. He also ordered the US aircraft carrier Constellation to leave its base in Philippines and proceed towards the Gulf for an indefinite stay there.

In a testimony before the Congressional Sub-Committee, Assistant Secretary of State, Morris Draper, stated that the US had agreed to sell North Yemen 12 F-5E fighters, 100 armoured personnel carriers, 64 M-60 tanks and transfer two C-130 transport planes from Saudi Arabia. In addition, over 200 US army personnel in Saudi Arabia were to assist in training the North Yemenis in maintenance of the F-5E fighter planes.

The US Pentagon spokesman, Thomas B. Ross, stated that of the Americans sent to Yemen, from the US, 70 would be military instructors and there might be about 52 others.


91. Ibid.,

involved in F-5E fighter planes training. However, he made it clear that the Americans "in these training teams will be involved in training in real areas, not in combat zones". He added: "All will be there for less than one year. Once the instructors had shown the Yemenis how to operate the weapons, they would return home". Perhaps, the US official did not want to give much publicity to its massive military aid to North Yemen as the North Yemenies did not want to appear before the Arabs that North Yemen was receiving weapons from the US at the time when they had just negotiated a humiliating peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Moreover, a publicity to US arms supplies to the North Yemen would give a pretext to the South Yemen to ask for more Soviet arms assistance.

The US aid to North Yemen was perhaps aimed at giving a clear evidence to Saudis and to the other Gulf oil-producing countries that the US would not tolerate any upheaval in or around the Middle East region which might jeopardize the security and stability of their regimes. It

94. Ibid.,
95. Ibid.,
was also meant to encourage Saudi Arabia to take a leadership role in the Gulf which was missing after the fall of Shah, for protecting the US and the Western economic and political interests in the region.

To neutralize the presence of the Soviet, East German and Cuban advisers in South Yemen, the US supported the Saudi Arabian efforts to find and pay for pilots and military advisers from other Arab nations, particularly from Jordan and Egypt who would be prepared to fight for North Yemen. Saudi Arabia seemed to be encouraged by the importance it got from the US administration and it was not averse to mediate between the North and South Yemens which led to a meeting between the two warring countries in Kuwait in late March. The two countries had agreed for ceasefire accords in Bahrain and to renew their old Union Project.

The renewal of the North-South Yemen Union Project fell apart, but gave time for both sides as the US arms deliveries to the North continued and the Soviets continued their arms shipment to the South. It was reported that


98. John K. Cooley, "Iran, the Palestinians and the Gulf", Foreign Affairs, op.cit., p.1031.
soon after the Saudi financed American arms were sent to North Yemen, the Soviet Union and South Yemen had signed a $1.5 billion arms agreement. Thus, despite the ceasefire agreement between the North and South Yemens the two countries continued to be a fertile centre for more conflict in one of the most crucial regions for the two superpowers.

THE SOVIET INVASION OF AFGHANISTAN AND THE CARTER DOCTRINE

On December 27, 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan. The combination of the fall of the Shah and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan brought new dimensions to US foreign policy priorities in the region; from the pre-occupation with political issues to that of Security issues. The invasion of Afghanistan, said President Carter, was the most serious threat to world peace since the Second World War. The steady growth and increased projections abroad of Soviet military power, he said, "combined with the overwhelming dependence of western nations, which now increasingly includes the United States, on vital oil supplies from

the Middle East cause a serious threat to American interest". He added that the denial of the oil supply to the US or others would threaten our security and provoke an economic crisis greater than that of the great depression fifty years ago, with a fundamental change in the way we live. The US officials argued that the new situation in the Middle East required an increase in the US military strength and ability to project itself into the region, a new regional security framework, and issuing a serious warning to the Soviet Union that any aggressive action in the region would be met with a strong American retaliation.

The invasion created the revival of a scenario which strained the relationship between the US and the Soviet Union, and had an adverse impact on the efforts taken towards detente. There was a clear determination in the US to inject force into the Gulf region to protect the US interests. This was positively demonstrated on January 23, 1980, when President Carter in his State of the Union address enunciated what has become known as the "Carter Doctrine" in which the President promised that "an attempt by outside forces to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the

102. Ibid.,
United States, and such an assault will be repelled by "any means necessary including military forces". The objects of this new policy were to assure continued access to Gulf oil, and to prevent the Soviets from acquiring political-military control of the oil directly or through proxies. The United States tried to exploit the situation in Afghanistan to influence the Muslim states in the Middle East against the Soviet Union. However, many of these states were very suspicious of the US, especially because of its role in Camp David. Therefore, when a resolution condemning the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan came up for a vote in the UN in early January 1980, only South Yemen, among Moscow's Middle East allies voted against it. Algeria and Syria abstained while Libya absented from voting.

To give credibility to the Carter Doctrine, the US undertook a number of steps. It included, among other things, maintaining a permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean and developing its capability to surge forces into the area by organising a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) and by improving the strength of the US airlift forces to move the

103. Department of State Bulletin, February 1980, Supplement B.
In addition, it was felt necessary to enhance the offensive capabilities to meet any emergency against US interest in the region. The region was designated to the US as a single interlocking zone of confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Subsequently, the US sought access to air and naval facilities in Oman, Kenya, and Somalia, began to upgrade its facilities in Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, and tried for cooperation with the Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia. This cooperation was to include building up a regional security capabilities and, if possible, stationing military equipments to be ready for eventualities. In February 1980, the US National Security Council Advisor Brzezinski and Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher paid a visit to Saudi Arabia to discuss the regional Security issues with Crown Prince Fahd and to explore ways of enhancing closer military cooperation.


106 Ibid.,

The Saudis wanted to have cooperation with US in the face of growing regional instability, but due to the general Arab opposition to the US role in the Camp David process, they could not enter into any overt or direct arrangement with the US forces.

The Soviet threat to the US interest in the Middle East was mounting even before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Soviet Union was already having a cordial relations with the communist regime of South Yemen in the Arabian Peninsula and the Ethiopian regime in the Horn of Africa. Its position was strengthened further when the Communists seized power in Afghanistan in April 1978.

On the other hand, the US position in the region was somewhat shaky. Even the most moderate Arab countries, with the exception of Egypt, suspected the US role in the region. The Gulf states and Jordan supported the Iraqi proposal for keeping away from the superpowers' orbit and maintaining Arab neutrality in the East-West conflict.

Given the fact that there was a continuous interregional conflicts, vulnerability of internal politics of almost every country in the region, and the continuous shifting of alliances of these countries, the flow of oil
from the region would be interrupted by disturbances in the region. Thus, the US wanted to strengthen its pressure in the region.

In fact, the Carter Doctrine was not solely the result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was reported that President Carter had called for a meeting of his strategist on June 15, 1979 to discuss the implications of and options for the US policy in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean. The US officials said that the meeting was for searching an appropriate approach that would

"avoid the extreme of Vietnam, where we tried to do everything ourselves, and the post-Vietnam period when we wouldn't do anything... we are not talking about permanent bases of formal alliance (in the Gulf) but we have to be able to protect our interests in a region far more vital to us than Vietnam ever was".

Months before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Middle East region was promoted by the American strategists from a "half-war" to a "full-war" status. President Carter appeared to have accepted the counterforce concept of strategic planning by proposing the introduction of the MX

mobile missile. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan made the US to establish a permanent Fifth Fleet in the Indian Ocean from units of the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets, increasing the number of Americans warships on location near Bahrain from three to five and installing advanced monitoring equipment in Oman and the Strait of Hormuz. The US also created floating bases, stockpiled military equipments on roll-on-roll-off ships operating from Diego Garcia base. These floating bases in the event that were to act as substitutes for land bases as political costs for establishing land bases in the region were too high for the US and the host countries. Therefore, on the eve of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the US administration, albeit with ambiguity, was moving from a strategic doctrine of minimum deterrence to extended deterrence with the aim of keeping its strategic superiority over the Soviet Union in the region. Donald Rumsfields felt that America's strategic-nuclear posture should reinforce and be seen to reinforce deterrence at the regional level, including threat- nuclear, conventional and naval forces.

111. Quoted by Marwan Bohyri, Arab Oil and US Threat of Intervention, op.cit., p.75.
However, despite these US determination to maintain superiority over the Soviet Union in the region and the presence of five US aircraft-carrier task forces in the region by December 1979 (Kitty Hawk and Midway in the Arabian Sea, and Forrestal, Independence and Nimitz in the Mediterranean), the Soviet did not hesitate to intervene military in Afghanistan.

THE IRAN - IRAQ WAR

The tension between Iran and Iraq had been mounting almost from the time Ayathollah Khomeini assumed power in Tehran. The ideological incompatibility between a radical pan-Islamic religious regime in Tehran and a secular, nationalist regime in Baghdad had an unsettling effects on the Iraqi-Iranian relations. The Iraqi government accused Iran of consistently violating the Iraqi territorial borders and air space, stating that there had been 544 such violations between February 1979 and September 1980. Iran, on the other hand, accused Iraq of violating her air space 183 times, and her borders 637 times, in the period between

March 1979 and September 1980. From June 1980 border clashes increased further and in September the border clashes took a critical stage, when Iraq charged Iran of using heavy artillery to shell the Iraqi border towns of Mandali, Khanqin and Zarbatyah, as well as the oil installations at Naft Khana. In September 1980, Iraq asked the Iranian government to withdraw from the Iraqi territory along the common border in accordance with the 1975 agreement. These territories included Zain al-Qaws, Maimak and Saif Sad with an area of 337 sq.Km.

Subsequently, the Iraqi Ministry of Defence announced that it had forcibly liberated the Zain al-Qaws area. On September 8, the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a memorandum to the Iranian government confirming the seize of Zain al-Qaws area and warning the Iranians to return the remaining Iraqi territories. On September 10, the Iraqi government announced that it had liberated all the Iraqi territories from the Iranian occupation, after the Iranian regime showed unwillingness to return the territories in accordance with the 1975 agreement. Subsequently, a


full scale war erupted between the two countries. Iran refused to stop the war arguing that Iraq must withdraw from all the territories Iraq took on 9 and 10 of September, a demand which Iraq refused to accept.

Both countries before the start of the war were more anti-American than anti-Soviet. Iran occupies a strategic position in the oil rich Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. After the revolution, Iran severed its link with the US, thereby undermining the US position in the region. Iraq had been a leading tirade against the US sponsored Camp David agreements and was trying to replace Egypt in leading the Arab world.

When the war erupted between the two countries the US policy towards the conflict was influenced by considerations such as the continuing hostage crisis, the effect on the flow of oil supply, the security of pro-US regimes in the region and the fear of closer Iranian-Soviet relations, particularly in view of Iran's regional and international isolation, her strategic location, her geographical contiguity to the Soviet Union and the fundamentalist and the anti-US orientation of the new regime.
While the US ideally wished to avoid becoming involved in the war, its interest concentrated on the prevention of any interruption in the flow of oil supply from the region, either as the result of intended actions by one or both of the warring states, or because of an uncontrolled spread of the conflict. Since the US at the outbreak of the war was not having much influence on either of the warring parties, its policy towards the war was derived from both the Soviet view of the war and that of Arab states friendly to the United States. The feeling among the latter was that Iran constituted the greater danger to the regional stability due to its declared intention of exporting the revolution to the entire region. However, there was also concern in these states that an Iranian defeat in the war was undesirable for strategic reason because it would strengthen Iraq's regional influence and the Iranian defeat might increase the scope for Soviet influence in Iran and subsequently in the region. It was in this context that the US announced its neutrality and non-intervention position in the conflict. It also urged the other countries to stand aloof. However, despite this policy posture, the US, like the Soviet Union, had intervened indirectly in ways other than open military involvement.

The US entertained the possibility of supplying Iran with arms and spare parts as an inducement for her to expedite the release of the American hostages. Indeed, Brezezniski had revealed in his memoirs that in December 1980 he recommended that the US send signals indicating that it might provide some military aid to the Iraqis if the Iranians were not prepared for that. He also revealed that in October 1980 Israel had secretly supplied Iran with American spare parts at a time when the US hostages were still incarcerated in Teheran. However, in spite of these, the US policy towards the war had composed, broadly speaking, of three interrelated principles: a repeated commitments to protect the freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz, the reassurance of US support to the regional allies, and the maintenance of the regional balance of power.

At the beginning of the war the US naval units were the only ones capable of protecting any threat to the Strait of Hormuz. Thus, the US was the de facto protector of the oil interests of the major oil consumers. But within

117. Ibid., p.506.
118. Ibid., p.504.
three weeks after the eruption of the war the number of Western ships in the area, including British and French units, had risen to sixty. Perhaps, because of the US and its Western allies moves, Iran desisted from implementing its repeated threat to close the Strait of Hormuz.

The Iran-Iraq war created a major split in the anti-Sadat forces in the Arab world. Libya and Syria came in support for Iran, whereas Jordan openly backed Iraq. Iraq broke its diplomatic relations with both Libya and Syria and Saudi Arabia too broke its diplomatic relation with Libya. From the US point of view the net result was a further split in the anti-American Arab unity. This split was formally demonstrated when the steadfastness front states boycotted the Arab summit held in Amman at the end of November 1980.

The United States got a major gain in the region by emplacing US AWACS aircraft and ground radar personnel in Saudi Arabia under the pretext of American determination to protect Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States in time of need. The Iran-Iraq war made the US military buildup in

the region more diplomatically acceptable, thereby refuting Soviets charge that the US buildup was a threat to the Arab world. And what enhanced the US position further was the new tied up relation between Jordan and US which resulted from the Syrian threat to Jordan. King Hussein of Jordan turned to Washington with a request for arms to counter what he called a Soviet backed threat to the security of his country.

The US had exploited the war for its own benefit and the war strengthened the US position in the region by creating a major split in the anti-Sadat-Anti-American Arab camp.

It is clear from the analysis above, that the year 1977 was watershed in the US policy towards the Middle East. The Carter administration had stressed more on energy crisis than on the Soviet threats and, thus, it believed that the Kissinger step-by-step approach to the Middle East problems had run its course and the time was ripe to test the prospect for a comprehensive settlement to the entire problems.

For Carter administration the Arab-Israeli dispute and the energy crisis were linked together. It was seen that the two issues revolved around one major axis: in the
event of an eruption of another Arab-Israeli war, oil supply to the US and the other Western countries would be disrupted. This could happen either by a retaliatory action by the Arab oil-producers or in the event of an Israeli attack on the Arab oil fields which might take place especially if the Arab oil-producers get directly involved in a war with Israel. Once the oil flow was disrupted then the result would be an immediate US move to seek a settlement to the conflict without sufficient instrument. This in turn would possibly create security deficiencies and bring about war once again.

Carter's enthusiasm for a comprehensive settlement to the Middle East problems had undermined, to some extent, the US-Israeli relations. Right from the beginning, Carter seemed to confront and press on Israel, presumably on the assumption that such action would improve the image of the US in the Arab world. Even before Begin was elected, Carter administration was engaged in a score of disputes, with the Labour Government of Israel over issues such as the Palestinian representation and the interpretation of the resolution 242. Carter had reversed the pattern of economic and military aid to Israel and had openly accused the Israeli Prime Minister of pursuing a rigid policy. Therefore, for Carter the road to a peace settlement to the Arab-Israeli dispute would demand a lot of concessions from Israel.
Camp David agreements became possible due to the willingness of the parties to make concessions and the effective role played by Carter. But the US could not get the support of the other Arab countries to the agreements.

The Iranian revolution had caused a sudden hike in the oil prices which in turn adversely affected the US and western economy. It had also reduced the US influence in the region. The failure of the US to influence the events in Iran had caused disenchantment of the Arab oil-producing countries in the US policy. This led the Arab States to recognize the importance of the Soviet Union. In fact, had the US not get Egypt into its side, the US position in the Middle East would have been in jeopardy because Israel alone would not have been able to protect the American interest in the region. Thus, it was not a surprise that after the fall of the Shah, Egypt became the second largest recipient of the American aid.

The Yemen war gave the US an opportunity to prove its creditability to the conservative Arab regimes that it could shape events in the region. The US indirect involvement was in Yemen due mostly to the strategic location of the Yemens on the Strait of Babel Mandeb by which most of
the oil tankers passes and their proximity to the oil-producing countries. Had North Yemen fell, the Soviet influence in the region and in the Horn of Africa would have been strengthened.

The United States wanted to maintain the status quo in the region against any internal or external upheavals. It wanted to maintain its superiority over the Soviet Union. Therefore, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US had increased its airbases in and around the region. Thus, the Carter Doctrine and the subsequent US military initiatives were aimed to send a clear message to all parties concerned, particularly the Soviet Union, that Washington would respond firmly to protect its oil and other interest in the Middle East whenever they might be endangered.