The Middle East has always remained an area of significance for the United States (US) and its foreign policy. The strategic interests of the US in the region have been access to resources, markets and investment opportunities. However, it was a region where the rhetoric of moral commitment did not match the actualities of political action; it was a region where interests had perfectly been transmuted into moral imperatives. The political dynamics of the Middle East were so complex that they had almost become intractable. The question of Palestine, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the intra-Arab politics and above all the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) had been inextricably interwoven not only with one another but with the US policy.

The relationship between the US and the PLO had been antagonistic. The Palestinian nationalism catalyzed by the PLO was a question that the US policy-makers had been grappling with for several years. Israel had been a perfect ally in the US policy which did not recognize Palestinian right to self-determination. The interests of Israel and the US had converged so far as the Palestinian question was concerned. The decision-makers at Washington had tried to thwart Palestinian nationalism; they had tried to extract mileage out of
it. But never had they been able to ignore it. The PLO and the question of Palestine had always been placed high on the US agenda. And the US had a determining role in the Palestinian question.

The world had always been seized of the Palestinian problem. Palestinian nationalism had caught global attention and had become a source of inspiration for similar movements in other parts of the world.

The Nixon Administration aligned America diplomatically closer to Israel. Since then Israel had been recognized as a surrogate power of the US in the region. Further, Kissinger obviously at the prodding of Israel, imposed ban on the PLO. Reagan started his term by branding the PLO a terrorist organization but ended up opening dialogue with it, thus repudiating the thirteen years old ban.

The present thesis is a modest attempt to examine the Israeli factor in the US policy towards the PLO. The first chapter deals with the determinants of the US foreign policy in the context of the Palestinians. In this chapter, the role of the Zionist lobby has been examined. Further, a brief survey of factors that led to the formation of the PLO has been done.

The second chapter is an attempt towards understanding the US-Israel relations under the Nixon-Kissinger dispensation. Attempt has been made in this
chapter to show how the deepening of the US-Israeli relations led to the denial of the role of the PLO.

The third chapter bears an index to the Reagan Administration's interaction with the PLO and Israel to find out the reasons for the total denial of Palestinian nationalism during Reagan's first term.

The fourth chapter deals with the US-PLO dialogue in 1988 and the factors that led to this opening of dialogue with the PLO. It also tries to find out whether there is any break or continuity in US policy towards the PLO.

The conclusion of this thesis reflects on the fact that the American national interests did not afford the US greater room for manoeuvrability in the conduct of its foreign policy towards the PLO. It also shows that Israel has been a factor in the US policy towards the PLO as it served the basic American national interests.

The method followed in this thesis is descriptive and analytical.

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