CHAPTER-II
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US. Foreign Policy and Superpowers Rivalry in West Asia

A. Geo-Historical Background of US:

The United States of America is a Federal Republic composed of 50 states. The central one third of North America is bounded by Canada on the East, by the Atlantic Ocean on the South, by the Gulf of Mexico on the extreme south and on the west by Pacific Ocean. The total area of the country is 9,529,063 square kilometres.¹

By virtue of its experiences and the political position, US dominates the World. Not schooled by continuous involvement in international politics as were the Europeans, the US approach of foreign policy has been very peculiar to them and that of the other powers.² The US has got a very peculiar type of foreign policy in each period since its independence. It has been greatly successful in its sophisticated diplomacies which reflected a style, sense of wisdom, decision making, behaviour and modern techniques etc. US has been greatly successful in acquiring its aims and objectives and serving its interests through various tactics & strategies. Broadly speaking, the foreign policy of US can be classified into six periods:

1. Pre-independence period - struggle for freedom.
2. Post-independence period - (a) policy of isolation.
   (b) Policy during the world war I - A short entry into the world war and support to allied powers.
3. Twenty years transitional period - withdrawal from the world affairs

and policy of neutrality or renaissance of the isolationism.
(d) Re entry into the world affairs and absolute abandonment of neutrality since world war II.
(e) Beginning of cold war and US emergence as superpower.
(F) Post cold war foreign policy and disintegration of Soviet Union.

After a long struggle US achieved its independence on July 4, 1776 and United States of America came into existence.³

The foreign policy of new Federal state was declared in President Washington's farewell speech. His administration declared a little involvement and less engagements with outside world, and stressed on economic relations with other countries. This policy was revitalized during President Monroe's period (1817-1825). The Monroe doctrine was declared in 1823. Monroe doctrine proved as a hallmark of US foreign policy and still it is of immense significance for US interests. They always take inspiration from that doctrine as it preserves foreign policy interests.

The annual message to Congress was addressed on Dec 2, 1823 as:-

1 US would no longer be used as colony

2 Policy of non-interference - "Any attempt on the part of the European states to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere would be considered dangerous to our peace and security".

3 Another important aspect of Monroe doctrine was based on economic interest - "We should not consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of its hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and security if it is in our economic interest".

Monroe doctrine has political and economic considerations and it became a foundation stone for future US foreign policies. The doctrine does not allow any external involvement or spread of any system to that hemisphere. At the same it permits to do according to the time, situation requirement and need in order to protect US national and economic interests for ever. Even though the US entry into the World War I made possible the defeat of Germany it soon retreated to its customary isolationism. But since 1939 Nazi threat was realized stronger than communist leading to German attack on Soviet Union in 1940 despite Non Aggression Pact of 1939. Moreover, Japan made a massive attack on US Pearl Harbour port in 1941 which led to the entry of US forever in the world affairs. After the end of World War II and victory of allied powers the composition of the international community changed its picture.

The meeting of the US-President Roosevelt, Stalin from Soviet Union, British Prime Minister Churchill and Chiang Kei Shek from China in Yalta in February 1945 and in Postdam in July 1945- led to the total end of the War, U.N.O. too came into existence in the same year.4

Gradually, Britain withdrew its influence from the world politics and US and USSR emerged two ideologically confronting superspowers. The world was divided into two hostile blocs and this was the beginning of the cold war. Virtually, the Western bloc was under US influence and the Eastern European part was under the leadership of USSR, the socialist bloc. Ever since 1945 onwards, the US gave up its character of aloofness and isolationism and ushered in a modern competitive world with all its diplomatic Skills and tactics. This was the time, when the policy of containment was introduced by George F. Kenon in which he insisted to

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concentrate to keep off Soviet Communist influence. Truman doctrine of 1947, Marshall Plan 1947, military blocs including NATO, SEATO, CENTO, OAS, all these strategies were used as bulwark against the Soviet influence.

**The main objectives of US foreign policy were:**

1. To contain Soviet activities.
2. Liberalism and open door diplomacy.
3. To ensure freedom to the mankind every where in the world.
4. To assist any nation in the world and to promote self determination and human rights to secure democratic system.
5. International peace and security.
6. Free trade, economy and industrialization
7. Welcome to private investments.
8. Economic and military aid to the small nations against Soviet threat.
9. Development of military alliances
10. To support small countries in regional conflicts.

**B- US Interests in West Asia and Varios Policy Measures:**

West Asia has long been a cradle of attraction for major powers specially UK, France, Russia and USA After the World War Second it became centre of rivalry of two superpowers as per their interests and requirements.

In the 18th and 19th century US took only sporadic interest and it involved slightly in Mediterranean, Syria and Saudi Arabia for its economic interest. Apart from it, US’s reputation was of only missionary appeal.

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and social work, trade continued but not at larger scale. The US did not declare war against Ottoman empire nor it entertained Treaty of ‘Sevres’ and ‘Laussane’ of 1920 and 1923 respectively. President Wilson had already endorsed Balfour declaration of 1917 that gave boost to the Zionist movement which henceforth struggled Arab resistance to make Palestine a Jewish state. 

The post war challenges and weak position of Great Britain made it difficult to sustain its economic and military commitments to the Arab countries. It was the growing power of Soviet Union which challenged this weakness and forced the US to assume its responsibility in the area. The US perceived its responsibility and role as guardian of Western interests in Arab World and subsequently to build up a deterrence against it (Soviet Union).

The interests of the US in Arab world are Following:

1. West Asian petroleum is a principal source of power for the Western European economy and a basic source of global defense. US always liked to exploit this petroleum resource as much as possible.
2. To keep an upper hand on Jewish interest.

The oil in West Asia emerged as significant wealth specially since 1945 when its value was realized during the war. Despite the lack of adequate transportation, refining and production facilities by 1946, the crude output of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arab and Bahrain was estimated

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8 Ibid., P. 17-20.
194,000,000 barrels. At the same time Soviet Union became as a major actor in West Asia. This region has a strategic proximity with Soviet Union and Soviet Union took interest here since long time back specially in Northern tier area and warm water stream. After the world war II, Soviet policy towards West Asia became reactionary due to the US interests in the region. For instance after the arrival of Shah of Iran in early fifties. US interests found their expression by exploiting out oil whereas Soviet Union always sought to use Afghanistan, Iran, Baltics and Transcaucasian for its defence and political purposes. Initially the Soviet interests were strategic and defensive.

The Soviet interests flourished on two grounds mainly political and strategic.

1. As far as USSR's strategic interest is concerned it fostered its influence in the region to provide a corridor for direct challenge to US navy in IndianOcean and to keep watch on US activities of submarines in the West Asian region and in Diego Garcia (Indian Ocean).

The another aspect of strategic interest of USSR in West Asia is to keep away West i.e. US and its allies to exploit fabulous amount of oil. This precious asset should not go to its enemy (western Europe, US and its allies) but to its friends (Eastern Europe). The Communist Soviet Union has always been active to deny the oil to be used by Britain, US or any other anti-Soviet regime.

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9 Ismail, Y Tariq. The Middle East in the World Politics- A study of Contemporary World Politics Syracuse University Press. 1974, PP 1-3

Secondly, as far as political interest is concerned the erstwhile USSR very diplomatically projected a picture of new perception of 'western' colonization in Arab world and subsequently tried to gain favour of Arabs, Third World and socialist countries. The Soviets declared that despite being communist they were not against Pan Arabism and Arab cause specially sponsored by Egyptian President Jamal Abdul Nasser. It got good relation with Syria, Algeria, Iraq and Libya including Egypt. Economic and military aids were promoted by USSR. Secondly the other side of political interest was to play a card through the ferver of Arab nationalism to keep off US and its Zionist moves in West Asia. Automatically Soviet Union carved out a clean image among socialist Arab regimes as Particularly in Iraq and in Syria.

Evidently, the US policy characterized on the above grounds except, its oil interest and US foreign policy towards West Asia is based on following three major interests.

1. To exploit fabulous amount of petroleum of West Asia.
2. To keep off Soviet influence and to counter communist tendencies.
3. To beef up a permanent ally 'Israel' to maintain Jewish lobby in Congress for keeping control and watch over the Arab resurgence and activities.

**Creation of Israel and US foreign policy Since 1948:**

The most disturbing problem in West Asia is Arab-Israel conflict that had stirred the entire area with political unrest since 1948. The crisis is not new one and has its deep roots since 1880 with the increasing spirit of nationalism among many groups of Jews. It was the outcome of aspiration to establish a Jewish polity in 'Zion' named area in Jerusalem but it extended to the area of Palestine. This movement was institutionalized by Theodore Herzel in 1897 in Zionist Congress at Basle.
in Switzerland. The British support was from the very beginning to the (WZO) World Zionist Organization. Consequently, Britishers offered them a place in East Africa but they did not accept it as it did not suit them. Britain very diplomatically made some promises with Sharif of Mecca but in Sykes-Picot agreement (1916) the Arabs were betrayed by Britain, France and Russia jointly. Moreover, in November 1917 Britain issued Balfour declaration through which Palestine was totally neglected and a Jewish state was established and in 1948 it was declared by U-N-O-11.

This was a great setback to Palestinians and the Jews started to shift there, gradually they occupied most of the areas and many Arabs were ousted from their homes. This resulted into first Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948. This was the time when Britain was not capable enough to tackle the problem, the matter was left for US and it wholeheartedly took the responsibility. Now Israel is the most important and inevitable ally of US in West Asia which is serving US political and strategic interests.

Significantly, the US presence after British withdrawal was only possible through the creation of Israeli state and US could give an impression of its power and influence to the rest of the world. On the other hand, the Jewish problem was very ticklish for US it led to double directioned US policy in the Arab world. There are friend countries like GCC and other Arab countries which are having healthy relation with US and some of the Arab countries are very critical of US by virtue of its pro-Israeli Position. But despite these constraints US never wants to make angry any of the party. It has to extract the oil and it would not let shatter its Arab strategy. On the contrary, simultaneously, 'Israel' is a permanent

ally which has to be developed by US support at any cost. By balancing this situation US could pressurize to extract maximum oil from this region. Being conscious enough with US activities Soviet Union, on the other hand, very carefully tried to satisfy Arab’s psychological and economic needs by supporting them economically and militarily whenever required. Additionally, Soviet Union declared itself as a sympathizer of Third World, ‘non-alignment’, ‘socialism’ and ‘Baath ideology’ and ‘anti imperial’ and ‘anti’ Zionist’ strategy. Though this step was taken to counter US influence it could not withstand for a long time. In 1955 CENTO was converted into Baghdad Pact though Iraq had been Soviet friend but at that time Iraq Prime Minister Nuri Said considered Iraqi membership essential for this pact. His political consideration were absolutely different. Naturally, he became a victim of severe criticism for his pro western orientation.\textsuperscript{12}

The Suez canal crisis of 1956 was one of major crisis in West Asia and superpower’s interests were distinctly clear in this area. Suez canal was opened in 1869 and since 1888 it became an important shortest way to connect Europe and West Asia but it was totally under the control of Britain and France. In Anglo-Egyptian agreement in 1936 the canal was recognized as belonging to Egypt and in 1954 Egypt was solely responsible for its defence. The events that led to the nationalization of Suez canal company in 1956, were partially forced upon Egypt by the Western powers:-

1. Creation of Baghdad pact in 1955, Nasser opposed this pact, tooth and nail.
2. A number of Israeli raids on Egyptian border increased Nasser’s desire to strengthen its defense.
3. Enlargement of Aswan Dam.

\textsuperscript{12} Foreign Affairs Report. July 1960, p 80.
When Nasser declared the canal was nationalized, the Western reaction came negative and resultantly there was a tripartite attack on Egypt from Britain, France and Israel. US and USSR took a joint initiative in ceasefire and forces evacuated Egypt by December 1956.

At this moment US played cards very cautiously and calculatively. It showed its resentment against Britain-France and Israel as well. The incident had just happened before two months of Presidential elections. President could have Jewish support but here US very tactfully emerged for peace making efforts accompanied with its adversary USSR. According to US mastermind it was very important and urgent to be a 'mediator' at that crucial juncture to satisfy Arabs and to continue its control over petroleum wealth, (lest Britain and France might have created some other situation and control West Asian oil).

The next smart and tactful move was Eisenhower doctrine of January 1957 to counter Soviet proximity in the region. There was another lurking fear- lest Soviet Union would reap the benefit of this ceasefire and spread its tentacles through its ideological compatibility with socialist Arab regimes.

The Eisenhower doctrine was based on anti-communist assumption in West Asia that was very vital for US security and it was categorically announced that any communist move would not be tolerated at any cost. US achieved remarkable success in its West Asian diplomacy through this doctrine. It kept continue the following things-

1. Keeping Soviet Union away from the area.
2. Maintaining a very clean image of US among Arab countries.
3. Increasing Soviet-Egypt tension (as Soviet Union did not support it during Aswan Dam construction).
4. Continuing US influence over oilflow

With the arrival of General Qassim in 1958 the political scene in Iraq changed radically and he withdrew its membership from Baghdad pact in 1958. Eisenhower administration was much more realistic than Truman's so far as West Asia is concerned. June 1967 war erupted out when President Johnson was busy to face monolithic Vietnam war. Jordan waters. Arab guerilla warfare emergence of Al-Fateh group led by Yassir Arafat (later as PLO), exclusion of UN emergency force from Israel, return of Sinai peninsula. failure of UAR, Syrian claim to be strong opponent of Israel and other unsettled problems and Arab disunity led to sporadic clash that converted into a full scale war on 5th June 1967 when Israel attacked on Egypt, Syria and Jordan.

By 10th June 1967, it had completed its preemptive strikes. It delivered a severe blow to the Arabs and Israel, very successfully occupied Sinai. Ghaza strips, Golan Heights and West Bank and nothing was left for Palestine. From June to November 1967 proposals and counter proposals were put forward in the United Nations in an attempt to bring peace. Generally. US took the side of Israel whereas Soviet Union sided with Arabs. On November 22, 1967 UN was able to approve resolution 242 with unanimous vote for the Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories in recent conflict.

From the point of view of US foreign policy, the June war (1967) brought major shifts in position of big powers in West Asia. Israeli forces

13 Spainer, John. American Foreign Policy since World War II. Tata Mac Graw Hills publication, New Delhi. PP 99-100
brought major shifts in position of big powers in West Asia. Israeli forces were shielded by massive protection umbrella of US and British army and aircraft. Basically, US response to the June war focussed on two major points.

1. To avoid military confrontation with Soviet Union
2. To bring about speedy settlements which would lay lasting foundation for peace than armistic conflicts as happened earlier.
3. Soviet Union seemed to derive psychological benefits from the Arab nations though it had not rendered any wholehearted support to them whether material or military.¹⁶

The US entry into West Asia was not like a new colonizer but it came into the region as a champion of West Asian politics to counter Soviet influence and to exploit oil wealth. Before the end of world war II, its interests were peripheral, it did not touch the area till British presence and kept mum in every matter. Once it ushered in political unrest of the region its policies have been oscillating between the realities of the world affairs and domestic considerations. Each president viewed and interpreted the area and its problems with different angles according to the priorities and challenges. But they preserved their basic national interest as per Monroe doctrine every where and every time intact.

C- US-Saudi Relations - A Survey from 1933 to 1969:-

Saudis have had a very different kind of experience with Western imperialism. The classical Islamic view of international relations has remained intact because Western influence were less pronounced in Saudi Arabia. Originally, this view reflects a bipolar world made up of Darul Islam (territory under Islamic rule of law) and Darul Harab (territory

¹⁶ Seabury, Paul. op cit. pp 205-208-212
outside the rule of Islam) Within Darul Islam there are not only Muslims but all monotheists or Ahlal-Kitab Christians and Jews also. Darul Harb includes non Ahlal Kitab and all atheists. This explains Saudi apathy to Marxism. In cooperating with USA since 1933 at the time of establishment of ARAMCO Saudis see themselves not as the agents of imperialism but as the protector of the world from atheist communist danger.

US formally recognized the regime of King Abdul Aziz Ibne Saud in May 1931. In 1933 Shah Abdul Aziz Ibne Saud obtained the oil concession through SO CAL Standard Oil Company of California and subsequently made Saudi Arabia world’s largest exporter of oil. On November 7, 1933 US and Saudi Arabia signed a provisional agreement for diplomatic representation, commerce and navigation. Saudi Arabia played a very important role during the world War II with US. As War spread to West Asia, US interests in Saudi Arabia increased. These led to a very close political relations between the two.

US was greatly impressed since the war period by the enormous potentials of West Asian Oil and state Department’s efforts continued to secure the US Stake in Saudi Arabian oil. It continued its emphasis on the importance of official ties with Saudi Arabia. Americans not only recognized a national interest in Saudi Arabia but acted to preserve it through security, financial, technological and military assistance and by pursuing a friendly policy towards Arab World in general.

Significantly, Saudi Arabia is a leading constructive power in the

18 Ibid. PP 101-102
Arab world. The basic determinants of its foreign policy are security of Arabian peninsula, Islamic Arab world solidarity, anti-communism and anti zionism.  

Saudi Arabia much of its brief history as an independent state lived in isolation comparatively. Most of the Arab states were swept by various ideological currents as nationalism, socialism and communism etc. Saudi Arabia remained attached to its own interpretation of Islam and Shariat. At that time the danger of external aggression was less. The British and US arrangements were there but they proved to be good exploiter of Saudi petroleum. This was very much related with Saudi internal concerns. Saudi economic well being, technological knowhow and industrial structure have been continued to be dependent upon external powers. And most important factor was security for which Saudi Arabia had to look for US help. This security concern increased after Yemen crisis in early sixties and escalating socialist influence. On the other hand US found Saudi Arabia a very flourishing market for oil, technology and even for other small commodities to be sold in Saudi Arabian market. Consequently, except some ambivalence in their approach at different time, both the countries reaped the benefit. The US approach to Saudi Oil was based on two general considerations.

1. Eager to conserve domestic reserves and to develop Arabian crude source of energy for European recovery.

2. The Department of State urged administration to consider the consequences of American support for the partition of Palestine and the establishment of Jews. By the fall of 1947, the Palestine question
was rapidly emerging as crucial consideration and development of US policy towards West Asia. The US support to partition plan also seemed damaging to the US position in Arab World but on the other hand oil was to be protected as resource from Arab world. Loy Henderson Near East Assistant Secretary expressed that—"We shall need Arab friendship if we are to retain our petroleum position in Arabs. Already, as a result of partition policy regarding Palestine, Saudi attitude towards US has changed sharply and its demands in the oil companies are becoming more extravagant."\(^{22}\)

Reports from Saudi Arabia indicated that if US wished to maintain the unquestioned friendship of Saudi Arabia, it must alter its position in Palestine. Ultimately, the US supported UN’s decision of creation of Israel and brought it into practice by force because of Jewish lobby’s pressure in Congress. The US policy was an error and the endorsement of Zionist objectives was a result of misguided humanitarianism. The importance of securing Saudi Oil was encompassed by an even greater strategic priority, and this priority was to contain Soviet infiltration in West Asia and to have an upper hand over Arab World through Israeli threat perception.

Despite US exploitation of oil and its desire to preserve its grip on it, somewhere Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries also took calculative steps; as seen after the June War 1967 and in Oct 1973 during (Arab-Israeli crises), oil supply was curtailed to the US and its Western allies. The OPEC Organization of Petroleum Exporting countries had already appeared on the scene through Venezuelan and Saudi Arabian efforts in 1961. But at this crucial juncture in 1971-74 a proposal for Arabian petroleum countries organization was presented that was OAPEC. The

\(^{22}\) Miller David Aron. Op cit. pp 179.187.193
development of US-Saudi commercial and economic relations started with the extension of US-Saudi Lend Lease aid to the kingdom in 1943. At the same time military relations were formally initiated. Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency with US' collaboration was established. In the broadest sense economic and military relations were based on Saudi desire of US commitment to protect the regime from foreign attack and US desire to make Saudi Arab an strategic military base for its vital interests. US military training mission MTM and transfer of M-41, M-47 and F-86 equipments, strengthened it.

The US-Saudi relations developed on mutual cooperation and understanding but the most disturbing area of stress was and still is creation of Israel. Saudi reaction and resentment against US support to Zionism made them ambivalent in their relations.

The demise of Western dominated security system surrounding Saudi Arabia began to decline since 1950 onwards with the virtual appearance of Soviet Union and its increasing power in Egypt. As currents of nationalism, Pan Arabism led by the president Nasser, the US-Saudi relations remained 'understrain'. Though Saudi Arabia silently supported Arab nationalism, it found itself in sharp conflict with the revolutionary forces in Arab world. Apart from it, Saudi Arabian leader King Saud expressed his strong opposition to CENTO and remained reluctant to support Eisenhower doctrine 1957. It appreciated Nasser's effort to restore Arab's viability to deal with West but at the same time increasing Nasser's influence made Saudi Arabia much concerned. Evidently, Saudi Arabia was facing a tough time by having strained relations with US and

Britain and being allergic with radical revolutionary changes including revolution in Iraq and creation of UAR in 1961. 25

The outbreak of Yaman civil war in the fall of 1962, in which Saudi Arabia and Egypt intervened and supported opposite sides - made the security consideration more strong for Saudi Arabia and this was realized by US. Saudi Arabia was supported by US when Egypt and Saudi Arabia were on the verge of direct war. Various defence pacts were signed in sixties as (SAMP) Saudi Arabian Mobility Programme, Saudi Armament Repair Maintenance SARMP and US supply of modification kits for F-86 and AIM-9E missiles cemented the relations 26

In the light of several factors the US occupies a crucial place in Saudi foreign policy in determining its future so far as its internal infrastructure and external security is concerned. It has been caught many times in Arab complexities. On Arab-Israeli issue Saudis have tried to play a safer role - declaring an anti-Israeli policy, while refraining in practice from becoming too deeply involved in the diplomacy of Arab Israel conflict. It can’t be vocal because it has to be faithful to US and despite many evident differences and ideological divergence they maintained those aspects protected which were vital for their interests mutually.

25 B Qundt, op cit p 7