CHAPTER-III
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Strains and Linkages Between US And Saudi Relations 1970 to 1981

The year 1970 proved a very interesting and favourable year for the US policy towards West Asia. After the death of Nasser in September 1970 and total withdrawal of British interference, US achieved its objectives more successfully and effectively. Anwar Sadat's arrival played a role of catalyst for US calculative moves in West Asia. Sadat proved to be much more realistic in his approach and pragmatic in terms of Egyptian interest. The vacuum left by Nasser was calculatively utilised by both Sadat and the US leaders upto mid seventies, consequently, they found a free hand to fulfil their aspirations.

Though this was the time of detente and US-Soviet relations had improved but US never liked that the area of the Persian Gulf or non-Gulf Arab countries would be fully dominated by the Soviet Union or China or any of communist power. China was given recognition by US in 1971 and it was emerging as major power in Asia.

Soviet Union and Arab World worked together but the moment Soviet Union wanted to overshadow the area, the Arabs did not like it. They did not want Soviet Union to do as Britain had done so far. Arabs wanted to be sovereign in their areas and use the Soviet Union just as confident protector friend so far as their sentiments of anti-imperialism and anti-zionism were concerned.

On the other hand king Faisal of Saudi Arabia started to take special kind of interest with Egyptian leadership (Sadat) and became more

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conscious for West Asian security perspective. But the most delicate problem was sensitive issue of Palestine and furthermore use of Arab's wealth, resource and oil to beef up Israel against the Arabs during the wars.

At this crucial juncture US formulated its own Gulf Policy for which it always looked to the British support in pre-seventy period. President Nixon had already declared that West Asia was of greater significance than Berlin and Vietnam. These circumstances forced US to develop a Comprehensive West Asin Policy based on two grounds:

1. To settle Arab-Israel problem based on UN resolution No.242
2. Secondly, Saudi Arabia and Iran were taken as significant central areas simultaneously. This move developed US twin pillar diplomacy in Gulf and it continued very successfully till the fall of Shah of Iran.

Saudi- Egyptian honeymoon proved as catalyst for US at that crucial juncture when situation was favourable everywhere for US except Soviet-Iraqi treaty of 1972 and other Baathist movements. President Sadat, the pro-West leader found Saudi Arabia best potential ally for economic and political support. After his visit to Egypt, King Faisal referred Egypt as the "citadel of steadfastness" and urged support for Egypt.

The Egyptian theatre had already shifted from Soviet Union to US umbrella specially after 1967 War when Soviet Union drew its hands in supporting Egypt during the crises. This development brought a suitable political climate for Saudi Arabia specially unopposing socialist

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4 Dowdi. op.cit. p 120
movements and communist parties in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Algeria etc. U.S. found itself in a more secure position as its enemy was getting tough time. Saudi-Egyptian friendship was a miraculous turn for US interests in this region. Saudi Arabia is not only a great possessor and exporter of oil but also the biggest country in the Arabian peninsula with unparallelled religious prestige in the Arab and Muslim World on account of the two holiest shrines of Islam here. The enormous oil revenues, it has earned particularly in 1970's, have further enhanced its capacity and prestige in the areas around Arab Gulf and Red Sea. For the Arab countries and P.L.O., the kingdom is great source of funds for the war against Israel and for their economic stability. It is also a crusader against Zionism and Communism simultaneously and this factor suits the Arab World.

Astonishingly, a country of such mixed values (which stood against Israel and Communism both at the same time, which liked US protection, a Christian country despite having the entire Islamic ethos and which also supported Palestinian and Arab cause) - is of solid importance for the US and at the climax of these developments US long term goals were to be achieved through a different kind of foreign policy towards West Asia in general and Saudi Arabia in particular since 1970

1. To maintain a constant flow of Saudi Oil to US.
2. Search for peace resolution of Arab-Israel conflict
3. Continued Saudi support to the US position in Gulf in keeping Gulf free from Communist influence whether Soviet Union or China
4. Consequently, US became a major arms supplier to Saudi Arabia and made twin pillar diplomacy successful. U.S. was already a great supporter of Iran.

In the early 1970s, the US became deeply involved in all aspects of Saudi Arabia's comprehensive military modernization. In 1971 US agreed to equip the Saudi airforce with F-5 planes and train Saudi personnel to maintain them which was expected to take close to a generation.

In 1972 the US agreed to modernize the relatively small Saudi navy including 13 patrol gunboat which were core elements of navy. Since 1971 US Saudi economic relations were somewhat on tough lines because some of Congressmen showed antipathy towards large scale Arab investment in US business. But later on, a joint commission on security affairs and commission for economic cooperation were set up in 1974.

A. 1973 Oil Embargo and US-Saudi Relations:

1973 was really a decisive year when US started to think seriously about the peace settlement in West Asia. The wave of Nasserism had already gone off but Sadat's policy was still overshadowed by Nasser's dashing personality and legacies. June 1967 war and after that war of attrition had posed a precarious situation in West Asia. Israel was now a strongly established reality in West Asia to keep a watch on Arab activities and it became quite easier for US to have control over Arabs. The US perception of Israel is that the country is not harming Arab world while the Arabs always have a repulsive feeling to it and that Israel is a great threat for their peace and security in the region.

Superpowers' combined efforts to bring peace in West Asia through UN 242 resolution, Gunner Jarring peace mission and Roger's Plan I and II all of them proved a failure and settlement could not be materialized.


The road of tension and conflict was still there because Israel had not returned then occupied territories yet and this move of Israel triggered off the feeling of revenge in Syria and Egypt simultaneously. Consequently, War broke out on October 6, 1973. when Egypt-Syrian combined offensive war launched on the Golan Heights and across the Seuz Canal border. Israeli forces suffered much damage from both the sides. Soviet Union started to support Egypt and Syria, US provided aid to Israel to stave off Soviet backed victory. Lately, the crisis was resolved by UN Security Council under the resolution 338, 339 and 340.8

This was the time when oil was used by the Arabs as strategic weapon to make Western powers and Israel technically crippled. Saudi Arabia never liked Israeli moves, being an ally of the same power which was a confident friend of Israel, Saudi Arabia halted oil exports to the US to protest US airlift of arms and ammunition to Israel. The Arab oil embargo spread the panic of petroleum scarcity among the western world and oil market.9

Quadrupling of oil prices rose more than 10% in 1974. President Ford was no more smart enough than Nixon to tackle the continuation of inflation and stagnation in economy. Congress was also not in position to take a quick decision at the time of crisis.10

By now during the three crises of Arab-Israeli tensions of 1948, 1956 and 1967, Petroleum was not given any importance and in 1967 war a light embargo did not adversely affect the volume of petroleum production in Saudi Arabia. And oil production continued to be increased. But during 1967 war Israel left a terrible and disastrous effect on Arabs'
infrastructure and that defeat was a great challenge to make them conscious of the value of their oil. President Sadat in an interview to Newsweek on July 31, 1972, warned US that “its interest in Arab world will become shortly a part of the battle for the recovery of our land”. And oil weapon was to be used very soon. Kuwait, Libya, Iraq and Algeria all gave a stern warning to US. According to Washington Post, on April 13, 1973, Saudi Oil minister Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani made it clear that Saudi Arabia would not significantly expand its present oil production unless US changed its pro-Israeli stance in West Asia. Saudi warning was warmly welcomed and appreciated by the Arab states and PLO itself.\textsuperscript{11}

On October 17, 1973, OAPEC Organization of Arab-Petroleum Exporting Countries in Kuwait decided to cut oil production monthly by 5\% over the previous sale. The very next day Saudi Arabia declared 10\% cut of oil and all shipments to the US as US (Nixon administration) continued military supply to Israel. It continued till five months and all Gulf countries UAE, Qatar, Behrain, Oman—all supported this viable stand. US, Holland, Portugal, Rodeshia, South Africa, Spain, France Britain, Canada were denied the supply of oil.\textsuperscript{12}

President Nixon called for a crash programme to make the US independent of foreign energy but that project could not bear concrete results.\textsuperscript{13} The oil embargo adversely affected the US economy which suffered a deficiency approximately about two million barrels of oil a day. Over a five months period the embargo costed a half million American jobs and a decline of Gross National Product GNP between 10 to 20

\textsuperscript{11} Dowdi, M S Dajani, op cit, p p 122-126
\textsuperscript{13} Tillman, Seth P. The US in the Middle East Interest and Obstacles, Indiana University, Broomingtons 1982. P 76
The oil price increased 11.05 dollars per gallon instead of 5 dollars—just doubled. The October war had a profound impact on traditional pattern of alliances among the Arab powers. A new Arab balance emerged with a greater recognition of Palestine and abhorrence with Israel. An insignificant and lesser role of Soviet Union appeared on the scene. And US appeared more conscious for oil than over before. Sadat- Faisal combination offered an opportunity to the west to adjust themselves with new realities in an atmosphere where Arabs had gained initiative, identity and recognition.

After the October war Algeria emerged as powerful country and Cairo, Algeris and Riadh established a new political framework for the unity of Pan Arabism (including Africa and West Asia). This war had shown that the Arabs with their manpower, resource and unity can make any war grossly unacceptable both from Israel and its international patrons. Moreover, it tore away the mask of Israeli economic prosperity and dragged the country at the brink of disaster.

Soviet Union lost its long standing image among the Arab world. It shattered Arabs anticipation that Soviet Union would strongly support against this crisis but Soviet arms supply was stopped in 1974 and President Sadat unilaterally abrogated Soviet-Egyptian treaty concluded in 1976, and finally turned towards U.S. plank.

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14 Bradley, Paul. Op Cit. P 49
16 Ibid P 30-31
17 Mahmood, Mohammad. Op cit. P 118
B. U.S. Policy and Kissinger's Shuttle Diplomacy:

After involving extensively in the politics of West Asia during the period 1967, the US became an inevitable part of West Asian peace process. It was looked as the champion of peace making process. The US policy after the traumatic impact of 1973 War, was implemented through the shuttle diplomacy initiated by the then Secretary of States Henry Kissinger. He had been very actively and continuously involved in West Asian matters. Kissinger’s shuttle diplomacy was materialized step by step. Though the entire Arab was not happy due to its pro-Israeli orientations, it was a crude fact that there was no alternative to have some hopes for peace making except through US.18

The US was feeling proud of as its image was clean as peacemaker. This was the time to get involved in West Asian matters more and more because Soviet Union had already cut a sorry figure in the eyes of Arabs. During the embargo period many times Kissinger warned of retaliatory action but the Arab reaction remained stable as was evident from conference held on Nov.28, in Algires. In December 1973, Saudi Arabia was willing to lift total ban on some conditions regarding Palestinian political and territorial rights but Kissinger did not give any green signal with concrete commitments. Geneva conference in Dec. 1973 under the co-chairmanship of USSR and US emphasised on the following points of settlements.

1. Scrupulous adherence to the truce.
2. Separation of Egypt and Israeli forces would be given first priority.
3. Israeli withdrawal from occupied territories.recognition, borders security arrangements and guarantees to the settlement of Palestinian problems.

4. Jerusalem contains holy places as 'Baitul Muqaddas' and 'Masjide Aqsa' considered 'holy places by three religions Muslims, Christians and Jews hence Muslims including Palestinians have right to go there.

The opening of Geneva conference had positive effect on fifth OAPEC conference in Kuwait on 24-25 December 1973 and 25% cut of oil was eased. Subsequently, Sadat proposed to end the embargo against US in next OAPEC meeting on January 2nd 1974 in Cairo. But Kuwait and Syria opposed this stand and wanted king Faisal to continue the oil boycott against the US affairs because at least Israel should withdraw from all the occupied territories. Sadat was in favour of lifting the embargo as US had shown a green signal of Egypt-Israeli agreement under Kissingarian shuttle diplomacy.

Henry Kissinger's efforts to mediate for a settlement were marked by a series of various visits to Israeli and Arab capitals i.e. Jerusalem, Riyadh, Cairo, Kuwait and Damascus etc. This resulted into several agreements on West Asian peace problem "step by step". This "step by step" policy included ceasefire agreement of Nov 11, 1973 and first round of Arab-Israeli talks in Geneva on December 21-22 and two other disengagement agreements in 1974 ie Egypt and Israeli agreement in January 1974 and Syria and Israeli agreement in May 1974. President Sadat took it as positive posture and this was the moment when Sadat showed a slight allegiance with US.

There was a mixed reaction among the Arab states. Though Egypt and Saudi Arabia were ready but Kuwait, Syria, Libya, Algeria, Iraq etc. were not agreed with Kissingarian diplomacy and it was considered as
'black mailing' move President Ford and the Secretary of State still concentrated on US requirements and goals in West Asia. Senator Fullbright expressed apprehension that US policy makers might come to the conclusion that military action was required to secure the oil resources of West Asia. Henry Kissinger had also indicated the use of force, (if it was necessary). Ultimately, in OAPEC's eighth conference in Vienna, Egyptian- Saudi axis demonstrated its strength by succeeding in lifting embargo over US and lately it was eased on other countries ie Portugal, Neatherland and South Africa etc21.

Despite the settlements, the situation was still in hung-over posture because neither Arabs attained the goals (Palestine recognition and return of their occupied territories) nor US was in comfort as it was passing through a very tough time in facing Vietnam war. Some analysts say that this embargo stand was weak in its later stages when US threatened West Asia especially OAPEC countries to tackle with force. They themselves were well aware of their oil strength and lastly they had to be flexible in their approach without plucking any pleasant fruit. On the other hand the other school opines that oil embargo had left a great impact on West and it was a bold collective step. The US threat to the Arabs was just the use of power to gain from the oil rich countries what it wanted to protect its economic interests.

**Effect on US-Saudi Relations:**

As far as US-Saudi relations are concerned it affected somewhat their friendly ties because Saudi Arabia always supported Arab cause silently but during embargo period it became subtle in its reaction against Israel with other friends.

21 Tillman, Seth. op cit. P 95
There were two types of approaches among the leaders of Saudi Arabia. King Faisal had been on softer lines whereas prince Bandar Bin Sultan and Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani always strongly opposed US strongly, US reactions and threats. Later on the situation shook the entire scenario of West Asia that absolutely changed the picture.\textsuperscript{22}

Though the diplomatic, economic and military supports were not frozen by the US but the relations got strained to a larger extent. In October 1976, Vice President Carter declared "if the Arab countries ever again declare an oil embargo against our nation, I would respond instantly with economic and military cut off".\textsuperscript{21}

US policy makers were facing dilemma whether to use or not to use counter measure against Saudi Arabia because since 1970 onwards US-Saudi relations had got deepened and both of them realized each other’s need and importance. This pre-condition and their importance for each other - posed a problem for US either to be more harsh or to be realistic and friendly to Saudis in terms of its economic interests. Moreover, US twin pillar diplomacy was of immense significance politically at that time because President Nixon had declared Iran and Saudi Arabia both as ‘responsibility’ of US for their security and on the other hand, US would serve its vital interest through oil import from them. The primary responsibility To maintain security in this area and build up of their military capabilities there were two important goals for US and this situation also changed the orientation of U.S. policy.\textsuperscript{24}

"The Arab oil embargo and demands for the new international economic order that was heralded by the third world like a hurricane,

\textsuperscript{22} Doudi, M.S. . . . Op. cit. P.132
\textsuperscript{23} In Ramizani, R K’s book Qouted - The New York Times, October 10, 1976
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid. P.P 7,65
convinced Kissinger that he finally would have to pay attention to the smaller nations of West Asia, South Asia, Latin America and Africa."

Assistant Secretary referred to the new programmes and supplies of defence material to Saudi Arabia as US was setting the transfer of F-15 Free Fighters, F-4 Phantom, F-5B and F-5E etc. Apart from it sales programme was initiated to recognise and equip the National Guards US companies’ efforts to improve Saudi Arabia’s defence capability continued. At the same time Soviet Union supported South Yamen’s sporadic hits by Mig-21 on Saudi border that made US and Saudi Arabia very much closer and concerned for each other.

Surprisingly, even after the end of oil embargo when the situation was very critical and there was a lurking fear of another embargo in 1976, Kissinger had criticized many times Saudi Arabia for this stand as the embargo was felt as knee jerk to them but they kept into consideration Saudi’s common interests. Secretary for West Asian affairs Alfred Atherton expressed that Saudi Arabia carried a considerable weight in West Asia: "Our ties to Saudis are broadly based on mutual cooperation and cover many areas of interest, including that of national security and self defense. US-Saudi relations are two way street on which vulnerability of matters from both the sides has to be considered. Profoundly opposing the Soviet expansion in West Asia, Saudi Arabia looks to the US as world stature".

He further emphasized with security and economy points so far as US-Saudi relations are concerned.


26 Hearing before the House of Representatives, Congress Subcommittee on Near East and South Asia of the Committee on Foreign Affairs. 23rd Congress. 1st Session. US Govt Printing Press. Washington. 1973 P P 34, 10

A- “Saudi Arabia’s vast terrain, its resources and the fact that its armed forces today are small and not well equipped.

B- Saudi Arabia looks its military relation with the US as integral part of its security.

C- Refusal on our part to provide reasonable equipments would be seen as conscious and witting step away from our present close relationship.”  

Saudi Arabia depends on its oil revenue to diversify its economy to build a broad industrial base and to educate and train its nationals. Despite Saudi Arabia’s creditable economic progress since 1962, several serious disabilities still hindered rapid modernization. Since 1970-75, in economic field Saudi Arabia stepped an outstanding take off stage practically and developmental expenditures increased. In 1975, Saudi Arabian government adopted a five year plan for more rapid growth of economic development of human resource. SAMA since 1962, Petromin 1962, CPO, ISDC Industrial studies Development centre, played a key part in solidifying Arabian infrastructure.

Subsequently, statements of President Nixon and President Ford emphasized on global economic interdependence and cooperation Kissinger’s speech in Chicago in 1974 on the consumer nations to be United to force profound challenges to their courage, vision and will, reflected his concern to search for an alternative energy source and cooperation among the oil consuming nations.

28 Ibid P.380
The major and distinct feature during 1974-1975 in US Saudi economic relations is joint commission on 'Economic' and 'Security' cooperation. The commission was established by the Secretary of State, Kissinger and crown prince Fahad. (see in Appendix-I).

Really it is a matter of wonder that despite having such close relations and being on the same road in various aspects, Kissinger's brinkmanship thought for the use of force in West Asia for oil exploitation. But many of US officials were not in favour of it and many policy experts criticized it as US was paranoid of a new embargo to be in future. Leslie H Gelb commentator on Kissinger's policy expressed his views as "It was found to be militarily feasible and highly risky, remote and hypothetical".  

Had this step been materialized by Henry Kissinger, the consequences would have been very adverse and detrimental to the US and Saudi relations. But some considerations from both the sides resisted to take this move. Neither there was any second embargo nor any Kissingerian military and forceful move. When the energy crisis over, some new realization and understanding emerged between US and Saudi Arabia.

Economic joint commission played a key role as catalyst in bringing both the countries close together very much. Henry Kissinger viewed - "we consider this a milestone in our relations with Saudi Arabia and with Arab countries in general". And Prince Fahad expressed "this augurs excellent opening in a new glorious chapter in relations between Saudi Arabia and USA".  

Sayyed Umar Al Saqqaf, Minister for Foreign affairs of Saudi Arabia.

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32 Department of State Bulletin, vol 71, No 1827 July 1, 1974, Bureau of Public Affairs Washington, D C P 9
made an official visit to US in August 1974 and appreciated US peacemaking efforts in West Asia. Kissinger also expressed his views that both the countries have great potentialities. They understand each other and help each other whenever needed most. They are the friends for a long period.  

Saqqaf and Kissinger again emphasised on oil policy that was the policy of negotiation, cooperation and construction between friend countries. The post embargo special relationship between US and Saudi Arabia represents the high stage of mutual cooperation. Both the counties were able to diversify their sources of respective supplies. Saudi Arabia could better pursue its relations with US and supported Arab cause and took a strong stand during the Arab Israeli war 1973. Both the countries could hope to gain a firm foothold politically and economically with each other.

C- Carter, Camp David Agreement and Saudi Reactions:

The US foreign policy has a long history in West Asian region and its different moves and designs were determined by Israel factor, Soviet containment and special relations with its allies i.e. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, and Iran etc. President Jimmy Carter (1977-1981), brought forth some different postures in policies towards West Asia and peace process. On the other hand President Sadat's sudden change in his approach reinforced it and subsequent Egyptian tilt towards US gave a strong foothold to US in West Asia.

Henry Kissinger's diplomacy of 'step by step' was slightly changed by Carter as he concentrated on a comprehensive peace settlement in West Asia.

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Asia. Carter administration, like its predecessor faced much problems in maintaining a special relationship with both Saudi Arabia and Israel at the same time. In the meantime US commercial, economic and cultural ties with specific West Asian states i.e. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Israel and later with Egypt improved dramatically. US was considered as the most desirable intermediary power in Arab-Israel conflict. This new reality gave a picture of decentralization of the friendly states and genuine acceptance of all major West Asian countries as partners of US in the construction of a regional security order. This new concept opened up and developed relations with all its friend countries.35

During the Carter administration, the first visit was made by Secretary of State, Vane, from 9-15 Dec. 1977 to Saudi Arabia and he brushed up US Saudi Arabian partnership in pursuit of peace and economic stability. Later on, Carter visited Saudi Arabia in January 1978 and received a warm welcome by King Khalid.36 Moreover, Secretary of Defence, Brown, presented a proposal for aircraft sale to Egypt, Syria and Saudi Arabia, this included 75 F-16 and 15 F-15 to Israel, 50 F-5's to Egypt and 60 F-15 to Saudi Arabia. President Sadat's courageous leadership was playing a key role in US policy formulation in West Asia. Saudi Arabia had consistently been a good ally of US since 1933. The Secretary stressed that F-75 could play a central role in defensive approach to Saudi Arabia's security as it was needed by Saudi Arabia as replacement for the older British Fighting 'Interceptor'. Secretary further expressed "if these F-15 were not supplied to Saudi Arabia it would move toward France for 'Mirag' missiles and that move would not be acceptable to US. Saudi Arabia stands for peace and deserves our support. There are many factors on security

grounds of immense importance which US and Saudi Arabia commonly share. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is well aware of its military limitations and it would choose these conditions.

In this connection President Carter sent an identical recommendatory letter to the members of Congress on May 12, 1978. "Keeping apart Israel's permanent interest and our unshakable commitment to it, Saudi Arabia has also become a firm friend of the US. It has not only been firm supporter of peace process but a moderating and conciliatory force on a wide range of global issues. It is beyond challenge that Saudi Air Defence system must be modernized and augmented. Saudis are taking their vital step to defend themselves against their radical neighbour South Yemen assisted by the Soviet Union and this is a high time for US to gain opportunity. Significantly, the proposed sale will enhance US national objectives contribute to our security and promote peace in West Asia.

However, US has been very calculative in its steps and decision making. They always wanted to board on the two boats simultaneously without any fear, by making a different type of relationships with both. Specially the national interests of a country are the primary objectives to be achieved both materially and psychologically. Keeping in view to preserve its interests, for instance, if there any emergency or any specific circumstances occur, US's reluctance, resentment and turned face for the time being to its permanent ally, Israel, does not guarantee improved relations with other Arab countries at the same time. Similarly, an openhearted aid and assistance to its Jewish ally (Israel), does not prevent

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an expanded and strengthened contacts with pro-American or neutral Arab regimes. Everything depends on the exigency of time and requirements of US foreign policy and its objectives.39

During these days Sadat’s presence in Egypt proved to be great support for US as its objectives were concerned in West Asia at that time. In early stages Sadat was overshadowed by Nasser’s legacy but gradually it shifted its line under the US influence. So far as ‘Egyptian interest were concerned i.e Sinai peninsula, he decided to be friendly with US and Israel both, apart from its neighbour states. Moreover, Soviet Union had already belied Egyptian expectations during the wars of 1967 and 1973 and otherwise Sadat’s dramatic visit to Israel in November 1977 broke a psychological barrier and grounds were prepared for the peace agreements to be solemnized in Camp David.40

Naturally, it is crystal clear that President Sadat’s changed moves developed strained relationship between Egypt & Arabs. Despite Sadat’s invitation to attend peace initiative to the Arab countries, specially, PLO and radical Arab states ie Syria, Jordan, Lebanon etc categorically refused to attend peace conference. However, Sadat-Carriei efforts continued and finally it led tripartite meeting at Camp David on September 17-18, 1978.

The Accord had Two Agreements:

1. A framework for the conclusion of a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel and Israeli withdrawal from Sinai peninsula.
2. The second one was framework for Palestinian autonomy in the West.
Bank, and Ghaza strip

President Carter’s satisfaction can easily be found in his own words “Those of us who were at Camp David really got to know each other—that is everyone except Begin and Sadat. It was to be much later, after final peace treaty was signed, that a modicum of friendship and respect developed between the two men. The tensions and personal relationships during the negotiations stripped away the facades with which people in public life often surround themselves for self protection. The framework for peace in West Asia and the framework for conclusion of the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt were two major steps forward. For few, however, all three of us...with pride and good toward one another because of our unexpected success” 42 This landmark agreement ushered in a mixed critical atmosphere of the Arab world and consequently could not gain appreciation because of its onen-sided and discriminatory nature and solution. Iraq, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Lebanon, Algeria and PLO itself did not look it with positive angle. The second agreement of this accord related to the Palestinian’s cause and their right, was entirely ignored. Sadat even did not pay heed on it and satisfied so far as its negotiations ultimately. Peace treaty between Egypt and Israel was signed on March 26, 1979 43

When Sadat made his choice for negotiating with Israel, Saudi Arabia pointedly did not join him and when he signed the Camp David Accord Saudis joined radical group (Iraq, Syria, Jordan etc.) condemning Egypt

42 Carter, Jimmy, Keeping faith, Memoirs of a President, collins St James Place London 1902, P P402,403
43 Egypt-Israeli peace Treaty’s text see details in white papers on Egypt-Israeli Peace treats UAR of Egypt, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Govt Printing office, Egypt, 1979 P 53,
and cutting financial aids also. Surprisingly, US hopes for broadening the Arab-Israel peace prospects also rested mainly on the Saudis despite their rejection of Camp David accord and their break of their diplomatic relations with Sadat.44

Saudi Arabia silently supported just cause of Arabs but could not express in articulated manner. In Camp David Accord the Arab cause, the autonomy of Palestine, and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Arab territories and other matters were talked of meticulously but nothing was acted upon except return of Sinai peninsula and subsequent peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Nobody cared the other Arab states including Palestine.

In dissonance with Camp David Accord, Saudi reaction was not directly against USA but the entire resentment was with Sadat and his deviated plans and his some new political postures which were absolutely not suitable to the Arabs. Sadat's visit in October 1977 to Israel was a direct challenge to Riyadh. Many times Saudi Arabia tried to persuade President Sadat to abandon his pro-Israeli initiatives because Saudi Arabia always silently opposed Israel. And Egyptian tilt towards Israel was somehow undigestable for Arab states. Arabs perception has always been of a different sort that Israeli can never be a friend and despite a good deal of smooth and harmonious relationships, it is Jew who always betrays. If any brother country goes to shake hand with Israel it is good but that should not be at the cost of Arab cause and Arab's identity. Saudi Arabia and other Arab states had sensed that Camp David accord would never favour them and naturally PLO's autonomy and Arab's 'say' as well as their real cause, for what they had been struggling for. And Israel would

be a menace in their self determination.

Saudi Arabia's efforts to drag Sadat from the US Israeli allegiance were tireless. It sought to achieve this through Arab League Council and Committee for Arab Solidarity, chaired by Dr. Numayri, the then president of Sudan. But all the Saudi endeavours could not bring any concrete result in restablishing Syria Egypt and Saudi triangle.

The Saudis again reacted at the US perception at that time that 'Saudi Arabia' is becoming an obstacle in peace process. Crown prince Fahad categorically stated that they supported Camp David only for the cause of peace in West Asia. The situation was very difficult as Saudi Arabia had to give an explanation to US so far as it did not favour Camp David Agreement. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia had to satisfy the radical Arab states that there would be no compromise so far as Palestinian problem was concerned. Apart from it, Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its stand for Palestine and Arab cause. Eventually it was a situation of dilemma and after sometime Saudi Arabia released economic aid to Egypt as it feared the US pressures might delay entire West Asian peace process. It had to preserve its image in the eyes of US (for security concern) and in the eyes of Arabs for its (religious, emotional and ethnic cause). Meanwhile, in Baghdad conference in October 1978, Saudi Arabia had difficult time to face Syria-Iraq axis and consequently it fostered its relations with Iraq.

The signing of Egypt-Israeli treaty dragged Saudi Arabia in a foreign policy dilemma. Either it had to take side of Arab radicals thereby damaging its ties with Egypt and US or it would maintain its ties with US:

46 Ibid p 28
Egypt axis. Saudis continued to keep economic sanctions at very low level and did not like the idea of absolute breach of diplomatic relations with Egypt, proposed by Syria and Iraq in Baghdad conference II.47

This was the critical time when many political upheaval took place i.e. Iranian revolution led by Khomeini and at the same time Iraq under the Baathist leadership of Saddam Hussain, emerged as regional power. Iraq had contributed in ceasing North-South Yamen conflict and Iraq-Syrian alliance got strengthened. All these new developments weighed in Saudi decision making to seek security by siding with radicals. Karen Eliot a policy expert who interviewed leading Saudi officials has to lay as follows:

"The Saudis believe that Arab solidarity is better protection than close ties with the US. Washington has no influence over Iraq, Syria or PLO-those Arabs whom the Saudis fear most. These worries have been reinforced by event in Iran".48

Saudi Arabia tried to maintain relations with Egypt somewhat reluctantly but simultaneously forced Egypt to abandon the negotiations with Israel. The then crown prince Fahad explained the Saudi attitude in an interview in Riyadh in June 1979 with New York times columnist Antony Lewis.

"Even after Camp David we are hoping that US government would push in the direction of getting Israel to withdraw its occupation from 1967 boundaries and recognize the legitimate cause and right of Palestine. But the signing of the Egypt-Israeli treaty shattered all the hopes." In the

47 Ibid. P 29
meantime US secretary Vane acknowledged deterioration in Saudi-US relations because of “clear” and “sharp” differences over Egypt-Israeli treaty. The Saudis made their dislike of the Camp David accord clear from the time the agreement was signed, specially highlighting their objection to the absence of the provision for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories other than Sinai, for Palestine selfdetermination and for Arab sovereignty in East Jerusalem. The US officials were astonished that Saudi officials actually meant what they said.

Moreover, in consonance with the Arab cause and Palestinians interests, Saudi Arabia had started to think that Arab solidarity can be preserved only by maintaining relations with Arab radicals and it was not necessary to have a very strong alliance with United States. Meanwhile proposal for the sale of F-15, recommended by US President Carter to Saudi Arabia, was bitterly opposed by the Congressmen. They viewed it that too much close association with Saudi Arab and other oil producing countries may harm the US and Israeli interests. Israeli Prime Minister Begin also said it was a ‘very dangerous move’.49

According to one Senator, the US supply of advance military equipments to Saudi Arabia and at the same time to Israel had casted an ominous shadow over the security of Israel, Obviously it was the test time for US friendship with the two countries which were virtually on the opposite directions. As the criticism on F-15 supply to Saudi Arabia spread over, Petroleum Minister Mr. ‘Zaki Yamani declared that Saudi Arabia was capable enough to finance its development with much reduced oil supply and other circumstances.50

49 Tillman, P Seth. The US in the Middle East Interest and Obstacles. Indiana Press University of Bloomington 1992. PP 109-111
50 Ibid. PP 99-100.
On the contrary, some of other Senators and US experts supported US- Saudi positive relationship and indicated that Saudi Arabia was an old significant and powerful ally that had to be compatible with US. Lastly, the decision was taken in favour of Saudi Arabia but the differences were there because of Saudi criticism over Camp David Agreement and its strong support to the radical Arab states. All these circumstances changed the direction of the entire trend and very interestingly and unexpectedly Saudi Arabia started to think of Soviet friendship.

Saudi Arabia never looked with an eye of discord toward Soviet Union nor it liked its atheistic outlook and communist system, thus, refrained from having good relation with Soviet Union. The new geopolitical situations that happened in Iran and stirred the whole area - constituted a challenge to the Soviet Union also. Though Soviet Union did not touch Iran as Shah was pro-American but the Soviet interest with north tier and Iranian warm water were still alive. The Khomeini revolution also blocked all the ways for Soviet Union which called for an appropriate Saudi response. The Saudis felt that they had to have a devise and a more sophisticated approach which would take into consideration Saudi Soviet proximity. Saudis seemed very much conscious of dubious character of US attitude - any time any aid might be ceased by the US. The Camp David agreement was criticized by the Soviet Union too and apart from it - Soviet and radical Arab states had normal relationship, hence the grounds were totally paved for Saudi-Soviet axis.

Crown Prince Fahd stated in News week interview “while we have ideological differences with the USSR, this does not mean we should ignore the importance of Soviet role in global politics”.  

Saudi Arabia was just about to establish diplomatic relations, Soviet Union intervened against Mujahideen in Afghanistan on 29th December 1979. All the situation topsyturvyed as the Soviet move was sharply criticized by the international community, Saudi Arabia was also among the criticl states and all the moods were changed

D- Major Events in 1979, Threat to Persian Gulf and Saudi Reversion to US:

The year 1979 was fraught with major events of the world politics and its repercussions, among which, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was of enormous significance so far as its after effects, reactions and counter reactions were concerned. Saudi Arabia severely condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistanat Islamic conference held in Islamabad in January 1980 and described it as a shrewed act and strategy to capture oil rich region in Persian Gulf. Communist intervention should be stopped and they had never dreamt of such sort of invasion in Third World countries in 20th century. This time Saudi Arabia also realized Soviet power.

The period from 1978 to 80 in which specially 1979 brought tremendous changes specially in West Asia and in other areas too. The fall of Shah of Iran and occurrence of Islamic revolution in Iran, Egypt-Israeli treaty of 1979, upheaval in Pakistan after the execution farmer P.M. of Z A. Bhutto, hostages crisis in Iran, the Mecca incident of November 1979, Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and in subsequent years Iran Iraq war of 1980- all these triggered off precarious situation and threats in the Third World countries and also greatly changed the foreign policy and decision making process in many smaller and big countries. The thrust of decision centred around the security now.

52 Ibid. P 269
Persian Gulf because now US twin pillar diplomacy was at stake. Iran One of the US's two pillars now out of its influence and the remaining pillar was only Saudi Arabia, the ambivalent ally. The importance of Saudi Arabia enhanced in the eyes of US and gradually some events made Saudi to realize US importance again for security than ever before. At the time of Iranian revolution US-Saudi relation were slightly strained. Since 1978 developments Saudis suspected that US was not smart enough to check peoples' revolt in Iran and Shah of Iran was overthrown. US could do nothing, hence the future of Saudi Arabia was also uncertain. So, what was the use of so enormous investments and military support that failed at the time of crisis in Iran. therefore, what to say for Saudi Arabia in near future.

The Mecca Incident:

The foundation of Saudi authority was questioned by the seizure of the Grand Mosque of Mecca in November 1979, Shia disorders in Qatif Oasis in Nov 1979 and Feb 1980 had been stimulated by the Khomeini’s regime. Apart from it, other Gulf states as UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, Oman were also frightened by some Shiats' turbulence. Mecca incident was criticized by USA and it started to pay more attention on Saudi security lest the opposition might overthrow Saudi Government like in Iran or any Soviet approach might eclipse this important and valuable ally and remaining pillar.

Being unable to act as a balancer between radical Arabs states and US and Egypt Saudi Arabia found itself failing to safe guard its own position in the Persian Gulf. There were many challenges around and Saudi

53 Tillman, P Seth., op cit. P 108
54 Kuminholm, R Bruce, Persian Gulf and US. Policy Publication, New York. P 96
government and it again realized its dependence and reliance more heavily on US support.  

On the other hand there was a need of some deliberate efforts for security point of view. US had only one pillar and other smaller Gulf countries which were to be beefed up militarily due to the challenge and unfavourable unrest in Persian Gulf area. US got a green signal and agreement in the projection of military force in Persian Gulf. Increased production of Saudi oil from 0-5 million to 9.5 million (approximately) helped to bring them much closer than ever before. Naturally, this was a sudden positive direction so far as US economic interests were concerned related to the petroleum import. When President Carter entered he had a benign view for Soviet Union specially after detente period. But the Soviet aggression on Afghanistan changed his mind and US felt a great threat of Soviet escalating tentacles and recently it had played a calculative card through Afghanistan to access in the Gulf region. Automatically, US had to get prepared with ready forces in the Gulf and this decision and practical move was expressed best in Carter doctrine of 1980 as he declared. "An attempt to any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests. And this will be counter measured if necessary through military force." Rapid deployment force (RDF) was stationed around the Gulf countries and in Indian Ocean (Diego Garcia) base.

Now the Saudis moved closer to direct military collaboration with US but it was somewhat reluctant to offer US RDF bases on their own territory. The main reason was US' sheer negligence toward the Palestine...
problem despite so much hue and cry 58

Now it was necessary to seek a new philosophy for dealing with the region as the US had to be much more awakened in its policies towards West Asia

1 Prevention of Soviet military expansion and the limitation of the number of Soviet clients and radical and anti-western regimes in the area

2 Security of friendly powers and their strategic assets

3 Continued flow of oil to the US Japan and Europe

4 Limitation of regional conflicts that might impede other US interests in the area such as Arab Israeli dispute, Iraq war and Lebanon-war etc. 59

Very interestingly, Carter doctrine had some contents of the doctrines of former US Presidents i.e. Truman Doctrine of 1947 and Eisenhower doctrine 1957. And his own doctrine of 1980 January, including all three of them are related with US interest in West Asia but the postures, requirements, exigencies were different in each of them, the thrust objective was to contain Soviet Union. Truman, therefore, directly indicated communist threat while supporting Greece and Turkey in 1947-48, Eisenhower named it an 'agression' of outsider (USSR). Eisenhower went even further by proclaiming America's Commitment to the defense of entire free world. As

1 US vital interests are world wide embracing both hemispheres and every continent


2. Community of interest with every nation in the free world.⁶⁰

By and large, the magnitude in which these doctrines were declared are almost same in the nature. Truman, Eisenhower and Carter were among those who took keen interest in West Asian security. At the time of Truman, Cold war had just started and it was necessary to check Soviet threat to Greece and Turkey. During the period of Eisenhower, cold war was at its height and US had to take somehow more swift and invincible measures to check Soviet influence. And, at the time of Carter, a period of new cold war or cold war II had started after Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and that posed a threat and perilous postures in Afghanistan, West Asia and all over the world. It was high time that changed the entire gamut of US foreign policy. Carter's disillusionment about Soviet postures changed his views. His preparation to anchor the Gulf region from external threats, cemented US - Saudi relations for the further years and time to come.

⁶⁰ Ibid.----- P 50