ABSTRACT

West Asia has been economically and strategically significant region for the United States and its policy towards the region was primarily directed towards the promotion of its political, economic and strategic interests in the area. The US-Soviet rivalry and the thrust of their respective policies conducted in their own interests contributed to the instability in the region. The mutual hostility between the Arabs and Jews as a result of the creation of the Jewish state, Israel in 1948 and the deprivation and diaspora of the Palestinians perpetuated the Arab-Israeli imbroglio in West Asia. This paved the way for the persistent crisis in the region.

The main thrust of the thesis is to explore the pros and cons of the American policy towards West Asia, particularly the US sponsored Camp David Accords of 1978 and the subsequent Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty concluded in 1979 and its repercussions.

Chapter I is an attempt to trace out the American actual involvement in the Middle East after the World War II which not only paved the way for the formation of US economic policy but it also prompted the US Administration to develop the political and strategic interests in the region in order to thwart the Soviet expansionist tendency and to protect the newly established Jewish state from its Arab neighbours which were opposed to the creation of Israel and the resultant
Palestinian deprivation and diaspora from their homeland. At the same time, the United States established close contacts with the oil rich Arab States in pursuit of the promotion of its oil interests in the region.

In Chapter II US policy towards the Arab-Israeli war of 1973 is discussed which also has wide coverage of the reasons and consequences of the war. Egypt which played an important role as the leader of the Arab world has been a focal point of US policy, particularly due to Egypt's patronage of the Soviet Union. But President Anwar Al-Sadat's apathy towards the Russians as a result of its initial failure to supply Egypt with some of the sophisticated weapons and the 1973 Arab-Israeli war paved the way for the decline of Soviet influence in Egypt and the entire Middle East.

In fact, President Sadat was determined to find a solution to the stalemate in the Arab-Israeli conflict as the Israeli occupation contained vital parts of Egypt and further the maintenance of a large Egyptian military force adversely affected the Egyptian economy. President Sadat had declared 1971 as the "year of decision" and in order to materialise his declaration, he sought the "offensive weapons" from the Soviets. But the Soviet Union did not fulfil the Egyptian demands as it sought the peaceful solution of the Arab problem in view of the process of detente with the United States.
Hence, Sadat wanted to abandon the Soviet patronage and normalise the diplomatic relations with the United States. In pursuance of such policy, Sadat expelled 20,000 Russian advisers and personnel on July 8, 1972. But the US unresponsive attitude to Sadat's action disappointed the Egyptian president as the US Administration did not want to alienate the most significant pro-Israeli Jewish lobby in America.

President Sadat was passing through a crucial period as his credibility and position in the Arab world had begun to suffer a setback due to the failure of his much publicised "year of decision". But Sadat had decided to fight a war with the Israelis and he ordered his defense department to engage in thorough preparations for possible offensive. At the same time, he consulted President Hafez Al-Assad of Syria to chalk out a plan of "operation Badr" in which both Egypt and Syria would attack Israel on October 6, 1973, in order to restore their territories occupied by the Israeli forces in the 1967 war. The initial Egyptian and Syrian offensives proved to be effective and successful. While the Egyptian forces crossed the canal and captured most of the fortified Israeli defense line (The Bar Lev Line), the Syrian army recaptured most of the areas of Golan Heights.

The Soviet Union which did not want to abandon its client state due to its regional importance, sent the arms to
Egypt. But soon the Israelis pushed back the Egyptian and Syrian forces as a result of the massive US military assistance. The setback to the warring Arab partners prompted the organisation of Arab Petroleum countries (OAPEC) to declare the oil cutback of production and impose the oil embargo on the Western countries, Japan, particularly the United States for their support to Israelis. The embargo not only adversely affected the United States' economy but crippled the world industries and transportation as well.

At this juncture, the West European countries and Japan reframed their policies in support of the Arab cause. At the same time, the United States brought a considerable change in its policy, particularly in pursuit of the solution to the Arab-Israeli imbroglio. The step-by-step diplomacy played by the US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger during the 1973 war led to the signing of the disengagement of forces agreement between Egypt and Israel but Kissinger's step-by-step approach also aimed at the fragmentation of the Arab world as it could not include the other Arab parties to solve the Arab-Israeli dispute.

In fact, Egypt's quest for regaining its territories occupied by Israel and the reconstruction of its economy, further paved the way for its strong inclination towards the
United States.

The US sponsored Camp David Accords of 1978 which almost brought a tremendous change in the Middle East politics due to the signing of the Accords between the Arab leader Anwar Al-Sadat and the Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, is discussed in Chapter III. At the same time, the consequences of the Camp David Accords have also been explored in the Chapter.

After the assumption of office by Jimmy Carter as the President of the United States in 1977, the US Administration sought to solve the Arab-Israeli imbroglio by calling the Geneva Conference on West Asia. But the differences in approaches and perceptions of both the Arabs and Israelis and Israel's contention for excluding the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) from the Peace Conference as a pre-condition, did not yield any concrete results. At the same time, President Sadat, in order to achieve a breakthrough, visited Israel which drew bitter criticism from the Arab countries and the Palestinians. Undoubtedly, it helped the US Administration to encourage both President Sadat of Egypt and Prime Minister Menachem Begin of Israel to patch up their differences in order to sign the Camp David Accords in September 1978. The accords which was signed in the form of "Framework for Peace in the Middle East" and the "Framework for the conclusion of Peace treaty between Egypt and Israel", however, was condemned by the Arabs and Soviets.
equally whereas, the Western countries hailed Sadat's and Begin's move.

The framework for Peace provided for the autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza strip but it did not refer to the right of self-determination of the Palestinians. The PLO and the other Arabs outrightly rejected the accords and called it as Sadat's unilateral action as the PLO and the Palestinians never conferred the authority on Sadat to negotiate with the Israelis on their behalf.

Although, President Carter initially did not adopt Kissinger's policy of step-by-step diplomacy, later he had to follow Kissinger's approach in view of President Sadat's Jerusalem visit and his desire for peace with the Israelis.

Chapter IV which has dealt with the Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty of 1979 is an attempt to highlight the pros and cons of the treaty. It also discusses how the Israelis had emerged as successful in their quest for the recognition from Egypt.

The Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty ensured the restoration of Israeli occupied Sinai and its oil fields in return of Egypt's recognition of Israel. It further called for the establishment of normal and friendly ties between Egypt and Israel. President Carter's presumption that the accords and
the Peace Treaty would lead to the Permanent Peace in the region, however, did not serve the purpose. On the contrary, it was condemned by the Arabs as a partial peace which neither granted the right to self-determination of the Palestinians nor gave any reference to the Israeli occupied East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights of Syria.

Consequently, the Baghdad Conference of the Arab League States and the PLO, imposed certain political and economic sanctions on Egypt and fully isolated it in the Middle East affairs. At the same time, the Soviet Union strongly supported the PLO cause in order to influence the events in the region. But the Russian intervention in Afghanistan further prompted the Arabs to cast the doubts about the real intention of the Soviets in the Middle East.

Although, the European Economic Community (EEC) countries initially hailed the Camp David Accords and the subsequent Peace treaty yet, with the passage of time, the EEC countries felt that peace treaty signed between Egyptian and Israeli authorities left, an adverse impact on the Arab world and the accords did not solve the purpose of the comprehensive peace in the region. As a result, the Venice Summit of the EEC countries issued an statement on June 13, 1980 which called for "the recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian
people", the Palestinians' right to self-determination, participation by the Palestinians and the PLO in the negotiations.

The EEC statement of Venice Summit attributed to the failure of the Camp David Accords which had evoked bitter criticism instead of positive response from the Arabs.

Egypt undoubtedly lost its identity as the leader of the Arab world as it was suspended from the Arab League and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC). At the same time the United States had to lose its credibility among the Arab powers as a result of its policy to encourage a partial peace between Egypt and Israel.

The thrust of the Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty was the establishment of close friendly ties at political, cultural and commercial level between Egypt and Israel which paved the way for the normalisation of Egypt-Israeli relations from 1979. At the same time, the negotiations to grant autonomy to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza is delineated in Chapter V. Due to the conflicting interpretation of "Framework for Peace in the Middle East" which provided for the Palestinian autonomy, Israel's intransigent attitude towards the status of Jerusalem, and Prime Minister Menachem Begin's settlement policy in the West Bank and Gaza strip culminated in the failure of autonomy talks between Egypt and Israel.
The conclusive part of the thesis focuses, particularly on the analytical assessment of the Camp David Accords and the subsequent Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty. Although the accords and the Peace treaty benefitted both Egypt and Israel yet, the entire documents were least significant in absence of the PLO and the Palestinian right of self-determination without which the Middle East crisis would further perpetuate.