Chapter – II

Historical Perspective of West Asia

a. Its Geo-Strategic Location and Political History

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Chapter-II

**Historical Perspective of West Asia**

Western Asia is a link between Europe, the Soviet Union, Asia and Africa and between the Mediterranean and Black sea, the Red sea, the Atlantic Ocean and the Indian Ocean. As such it had become a field of vested interests for three continents. The obnoxious policy of allocating 'spheres of influence' in order to circumvent 'oil rivalries' and to carry on imperialist exploitation provides one of the blackest chapters in the history of mankind. Egypt, Syria, Palestine, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, all provide the same sorry spectacle of internal weakness and mutual antagonisms perpetuated and whipped up by self-seeking powers. The major participants in the scramble for spoils, privilege and power are Britain, America, Russia and to a lesser extent France. The history of West Asia up to the First World War was largely a history of Ottoman empire. The Ottoman empire involved almost every great European power in its foreign and domestic affairs. And this provided the opportunity to the great powers to penetrate in the region.

History bears witness to a large process of cultural assimilation between India and West Asia. Britain's interest in safeguarding her life line to the East led her, inevitably, to concentrate on major routes to India. Since the day of her empire in India Britain has regarded herself as a custodian of West Asia including Suez. America and France supported Britain in view of the strategic importance of these areas and oil reserves. Throughout recent history, the region has witnessed the presence of a global great power struggle that has influenced the political dynamics of the region.

The Soviet Union on her part continued to make abortive attempts to secure a warm water post in the Black Sea. The Russian interests in the region
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dates back from the times of Catherine the great. Also, the control of oil was her great desire. Thus, ambitions of Russia, America and Great Britain have converted West Asia into one of the most explosive trouble spots of the world. But with India this region played a vital role in the historical development of this country and has been of key importance through the centuries. Historical trade routes lay through this region much before Islam came on the scene. Islam fortified the ties. Few regions in the world have been as close historically to India as this one, call it Near East, Middle East, Gulf (Persian Gulf), West Asia and what have you. Today nearly a hundred million Muslims in India provide testimony to this interaction and intimate links. These links have been socio-economic and cultural with the Muslim world of the Gulf and West Asia, whether Shia or Sunni, beginning of course even before either was there. But both the streams of Islam flowed to India and made a natural home here. This relationship acquired a new dimension with the struggle against the imperialism in the modern world and the post war colonial revolt. Western Asia is thus in every way a conglomeration of states with different interests and working for different, and often mutual objectives. With the tragedy of Palestine the whole Western Asia shivered, the tragedy was not the sudden outcome of the partition plan of 1947, but it was the outcome of an old colonial plan which found in Zionism the means for its realisation.

a. Its Geo-Strategic Location and Political History:

The geography of West Asia both as to the Global setting and as to physical characteristics, explains the strategic value of the area in the contemporary world. Individually the countries of West Asia presents many physical contrasts, high and rugged mountains in Eastern and Southern Anatolia, others fronting on the Mediterranean in Syria and Lebanon, and yet others fringing the great Iranian Plateau and bounding the Arabian shield in the South West are compensated by predominantly low and flat expanses in Egypt, Arabia
and Mesopotamia. Coast lines on the Black and Caspian seas, the Persian Gulf and Red Sea, and the Eastern Mediterranean are regular and unbroken, for most part, and good natural harbours are rare. Yet the Aegean coast of Turkey is deeply Serrated and is flanked by islands which have figured importantly in the relationships of peoples of East and West from ancient times to present. One very significant fact drawn from these dispositions of nature is that, except at a few points, these countries of West Asia are difficult to access from other quarters of the globe. No large river other than Nile debouch into Western seas, and small tortuous and shallow streams through which this noble river reaches the Mediterranean and the extensive mud and sand bars which guard the watered delta, flanked by the arid reaches on either side, give Egypt a large measure of natural protection on the North, as the Western desert and the forbidden Red Sea coast do on West and East. Arabia, whose Western and Southern perimeters are formed by mountainous highlands through which there are no easy pathway into the interior, faces eastward toward the Persian Gulf. On the East natural defenses are provided by extensive deserts, relieved only by a few Oases. On the North this huge, rocky, arid 'shield' merges gradually into more hospitable lands. Except for the Egyptian invasion of Arabia under the direction of Muhammad Ali Pasha in the earlier past of the last century. The main lives of force which have affected Arabia generally have had Northerly and Southerly axes.

Palestine is that part of West Asia which lies between the Mediterranean in the West, Lebanon in the North, Syria and Jordan river in the East, and the Red Sea and Sinai in the South and South West. The area of Palestine is 27,027 km² and in the past was often called as South Syria because it forms a natural part of it. This geographic position made Palestine through out history, a passage and stepping stone for a large number of countries and successive civilisations. The prominence of Palestine prevailed until the West Asia occupies the position of a partial barrier—a kind of baffle—across the natural lines of passage by water between the countries washed by the Atlantic and its long Mediterranean extension.
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and those dependent for trade and communications on the Indian ocean—that is in both geographical and cultural terms, between the West and the farther East.

The Taurus and Amanus mountain ranges have inhibited movement in land from the Mediterranean since earliest times. Even the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which enter the Persian gulf through the common estuary of the Shatt-al-Arab, belie the promise of the map to provide ready access from the South into the heart of Iraq and Syria, the lower Euphrates is lost in a maze of marshy streams almost impassable to vessels of any size, while the seven-mile-an-hour current of the Tigris can be overcome only by strongly powered vessels. The streams entering the Persian Gulf from Iran, of which only the Qarun is noteworthy, likewise provide no natural routes of travel into the interior for considerable distances because of various sorts of obstructions. Along the Northern boundaries of the region, nature has provided major obstructions. The high Caucasus mountains lie across an otherwise logical invasion route from the North into Eastern Anatolia or Northern Iran.

For other purposes the area is dry, over great portions there is insufficient precipitation to support any agricultural activities, wide expanses are desert or barren wastes, uninhibited or occupied only by nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes. The region is very important for two reasons, first is its strategic locations, many of the most important sea and air routes pass through and over it. Any power that could seize control over the West Asia could disrupt communications between the European countries and their allies in India, South east Asia and Australia. Second, the West Asian region is rich in one of the world’s most important resources, petroleum. The area has almost half of the world’s oil reserves and supplies much of the petroleum used in Europe. This region marks the center where for centuries the East and the West met. Humanity always passed through here on its way between Europe and Asia, and between Africa
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and Europe. Water routes led to Suez and the Dardanelles, caravans came from Central and Southern Asia to Baghdad and on to the Levant.

So West Asia which encompasses the world's oldest centers of civilisation, presents now to the modern world some of its most difficult and intriguing problems. A little of the intense concern with which the area has come to be regarded in later years, indubitably stems from scholarly interest in the ancient origins of modern culture some of its springs from objective interest in the efforts of a group of a young nation which had become occupants of the area. The geography of the region both to the global setting and as to the local physical characteristics, explains the strategic value of the area in the contemporary world. It requires but little imagination, when we look at the world map, we will realise that how the West Asian region become so important. Strategically it occupies a position which makes a kind of baffle-across the natural lines of passage by water between the countries washed by Atlantic and its long Mediterranean extension and those dependent for trade and communications on the Indian Ocean.

Although the peoples of Western Europe in the modern times have not been isolated from and unaware of the West Asia nearly to the same extent, and have had some realisation of the importance of the area in European affairs, they have shown little more sagacity than Americans in dealing with contemporary West Asian issues. This circumstance is not altogether surprising, Western European relationships, including those of Great Britain with the West Asia originated and were formalised when the area was occupied by the two great empires-those of the Ottomans and Qajar dynasties. In the course of the several centuries coved by the sway of these regimes, European official attitudes and methods of approach were formed and became habitual. They were not susceptible of easy change and adaptation as the old empires passed away and gave place to a number of states varying widely in size, resources, institutions and outlook, but all of them intent on breaking with the past in many ways and on becoming free,
modern consequential nations. The attitudes manifested in the course of these efforts by the peoples of the area, each imbued with its own form of nationalistic feeling, presented difficulties nearly as puzzling to the foreign offices of European states as to government agencies of the United States.

Physio-geographical features still are factors of prime importance in the flow of commercial goods and in the movement of armed forces. The elements that combine to make up the geographical environment of the area consequently enter into and have an important bearing on every question which affects the international relationships of the West Asian states. Only the designs and rival interests of the great powers may have exerted a comparable influence on the trend of the events in the area in recent times. There have been two manifestations, one positive and voluntary, and other negative and involuntary.

The most outstanding aspect of the West Asian region in the last hundred and fifty years has been the impact of the West on the society of the region, and the intensity of the impact has increased in geometrical progression with the passage of time. The Western education afforded by Christian missionaries in West Asia opened up to them the gates of modern civilisation and created a deep discontent with their Eastern patterns of life which converted into a desire to 'enlighten' their people and lead them from their backward and static position to the light of European civilisation. They planned for a grafting on a basic Eastern civilisation, of the attractive and inspiring ideas of the West. But they failed to understand the underlying forces which had created the Western type civilisation and the forces which had brought about the Eastern type, that the values evolved by each were the results of processes and forces that could not be manipulated and changed by a mere decision of an elite group. This voluntary and positive impact of the West was soon to encounter a negative and involuntary one. Egypt came under the British rule at the end of the 19th century, and France and Britain were to follow as mandatories over the territories detached from the Ottoman
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empires after the First World War. Any study of the problems of the modern West Asia prescribes a basic knowledge of the past, not only for the more comprehensive understanding of the present as it evolved from the past, but for discovering the clashes between past practices and the modern usages adopted by the new West Asian society.

One of the factors which has seriously affected the region has been the discovery and production of oil. In attempting to evaluate the contribution of this factor to the modern development of the area, oil production is purely a product of modern times and must be studied as such in its effects on the East as well as on the West. The oil of the area also presented problems to the great powers who in one form or another had been involved in the area for the last two hundred years. The West Asia because of its location and strategic significance, has played an important role in the international affairs, it was here that the great power interests clashed, and it was here that decisive battles were fought. British policy since the development of the empire in India regarded the West Asia as the life line of the empire and attempted to control all possible approaches to the area and prevented the penetration by other great powers. England clashed frequently with Russia over Persia, in 1907, a modus vivendi was worked out which divided Persia between Britain and Russia, this division gave Britain control over southern Persia. By maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman empire, England kept both France and Russia from breaking through into the West Asia. In the mean time oil had been discovered and developed by the British in Persia and the area assumed a new importance. Germany became a threat in her efforts to penetrate into the West Asia by way of Berlin and Baghdad railway, and during the first fourteen years of the last century British policy veered between completely opposing Germany and cooperating with her, with the collapse of the Ottoman empire, the defeat of Germany, and the elimination of Russia from the region, England occupied the area directly. As a trade route and a line of defense for India and British communications with the East, the area was long of great
importance to Britain. Though India had relations with the West Asian countries much before the advent of British rule in India. From the most ancient times, India’s communications with West Asia have been both along the land and sea routes. Apart from these commercial, cultural and political factors, strategic considerations weigh considerably in India’s relations with West Asia. The protection and defense of the Suez and the effort to keep it open as a means of communication to the Indian empire had ever been the cardinal principle of British policy in West Asia. Because of the strategic factors the West Asian region was always remained and still is an area of conflict between the great powers.

The imperial Turkey known as the Ottoman empire and in the language of diplomacy the ‘Porte’, is the key to the complicated story of West Asia. Turks entered into the Arab empire as slaves, body guards of the Caliphs and finally emerged as rulers. The Turks accepted Islam because it fostered their martial spirit. The Ottomans grew to be the leading power in Asia Minor, in the fourteenth century the Ottomans established themselves at strategic points in Greece (1399), Serbia (1389), and Bulgaria (1393) and managed to take Constantinople (1453). In 16th century Sultan Selim I (1512-20) conquered Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria and Arabia. The reign of Suleiman I (1520-1566) the magnificent law giver and Selim’s only son, was the climax of Ottoman greatness. The Ottoman rulers built up a special civil service consisting of slaves, prisoners of war and the children of conquered people, they had been taken to Istanbul for training. They were trained hard enough and called Janissars and this system was called Janissary, they were totally devout to warfare and their Sultan. The Ottoman empire reached its heights of glory in the sixteenth century. Henceforth, Ottoman Sultans also became the Caliphs of Islam. Sultan Suleiman the magnificent law giver gave his empire a system of government. He allowed local governments to function undisturbed and placed Turkish officials at the top. His Christian subjects enjoyed better protection. At the zenith of his power he granted
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the famous capitulations to foreign powers, to regulate the status of foreigners. France received them in 1535, Austria in 1567 and England in 1592. According to the articles of the capitulations, they enjoyed privileged positions; their citizens were no subject of Turkish laws, paid no taxes and their houses and business premises were inviolable. After Suleiman's death, the empire was ruled by a succession of utterly cruel and incapable, corrupt sultans, under them the administration and military organisation started deteriorating. In the late seventeenth century the Ottoman empire began to show signs of rotting away from inside. The Janissary's became a lazy privileged group. After the victorious war Russia imposed on Turkey, the treaty of Kutschuk Kainardji was made in 1774, where Russia gained control of the northern coast of the Black Sea. The interests of the various European powers in West Asia became manifest, until near the close of eighteenth century the interests of the Western Europeans, Venetians, French and English were confined to trade with the lands under Ottoman rule. The French began to think of establishing control over Egypt, the French explorer Napoleon Bonaparte in 1778, organised a military expedition to Egypt for the purpose of crippling British communications with India. But it is clear that after centuries of friendship and understanding France had to invade the Ottoman territory, on 1st August 1798, Napoleon occupied the whole of Egypt. The British brought to the awareness of the geographical bearings of the Ottoman territories, these developments brought British statesmen, adventurers and business groups to make trial of the practicability of opening up of a route of communications between England and India through Ottoman territories, and this brought the European powers to West Asia. Britain acquired Malta in 1800, then in 1801 the French Egypt surrendered to the British. Britain was determined to gain uncontested supremacy in Persian Gulf. Russia's influence was by no means negligible to its vast size, physical position and proclivities for expansion in all directions were ever present. Before the close of eighteenth century Russia had become the chief power in Black Sea and Caspian Sea became a Russian lake.
Before the end of Napoleonic wars Great Britain had entered into engagements with the independent and semi-independent Sheikhdoms of Persian Gulf, which extended from time to time, when after 1814 the Anglo-Persian relations deteriorated, Russia found it inexpedient to resort open conquest of that country. Russia was looking to grasp any opportunity to control the Turkish straits. By this time the Ottoman empire was declining and Russia endeavoured by every means to project its authority into the power vacuum caused by the weakness of the Ottoman rule. Out of this situation emerged the most characteristic issue of the century 'the Eastern Question' - the question of the disposition of the Turkish territories when the palsied hands of the Sultan could no longer hold the weight of the Turkish empire. It was the problem of the succession of the declining Ottoman empire. Because of their own interests Britain and France wanted to see the declining Ottoman empire, besides this they could not prevent the Russo-Turkish war of 1827, and it became acute when Pasha of Egypt Muhammad Ali waged his own war of independence in 1830, but was prevented from seizing Constantinople. The Eastern Question was also responsible for the theme of Crimean war which resulted into the neutralisation of the Black Sea, which was under Russian control and the closing of the straits to non-Turkish vessels of war.

Now there were Russia, France, Britain and Germany who were directly involved in the bitter struggle for the control of West Asia. German commercial influence was now preponderant in Turkey beyond any doubt and she was supplying a large proportion of Turkey's armament needs. Consequently, the German company obtained the concessions. Till to this stage the British were favourable to Germans. The threat to Britain's position in West Asia comes mainly from Russia and France. In 1892, the British ambassador in Berlin had urged the Germans to develop a commercial interest in the region as a counterpoise to Russia. In 1898, British relations to the German railway concession were
favourable and Turkish railway was given in the hands of Germany. In 1900, the German technical mission visited Kuwait and made a tempting offer to the Sheikh for a concession for a terminus and a port. When Sheikh resisted their offer, the Germans persuaded the Ottoman government.

In 1903, the Anatolian Railway Company which was partly British partly German had its plan for Baghdad railway, invited British capitalists to participate on equal terms with the existing German and French interests. The Balfour government favoured the acceptance, but the cabinet was unanimous. Consequently, the British government declined the German offer. The following year in 1904, the Anglo-French entente was born and in 1907, the Anglo-Russian entente. The same year in 1907, the young Turks who were dispersed by Abdul Hamid in 1876, began to infiltrate into their country. They established secret societies under the name of ‘Committee of Union and Progress’. The Arabs under the tyranny of Abdul Hamid, began to oppose his statecraft, had welcomed the Young Turk Revolution. When the young Turks proclaimed the Constitution of 1876, Abdul Hamid changed himself into a Constitutional ruler. Secretly, the Sultan plotted for the overthrow of the Committee on April 13, 1909, he carried out a coup with the help of some loyal regiments, but his triumph was very short lived, on April 25, Young Turks re-entered Constantinople and deposed Abdul Hamid. On the other hand the Arabs were not represented in the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress, they founded the Young Arab Association with the object of securing Arab independence from Turkish or any other foreign rule.

In the foreign affairs, the Turkish government was helpless and desperate, Europe was now divided into two armed camps. Russia was the arch enemy, Britain repelled the Young Turks, France was never popular at Constantinople. Italy waited like a jackal to pick up any thing which she could find. In a state of no sincerity Germany extended her left hand towards the dying Turkish state. The Turks had to grasp it because they felt that military re-organisation was the
only way to survive. Turkey requested Britain for an alliance, but Britain rejected it. Then Turkish government asked Germany to send a military mission, when Germany declared war against Russia on 1st August 1914, and against France on 3rd August, it became urgent for Germany to net Turkey on her side, if the Turkish Straits could be closed Russia would be paralysed because Russia depended on the supply of arms from her western allies through these narrow water ways. Germany closed the Baltic sea to Russian ships, time was on the side of Turkey, defensive treaty was immediately signed by German and Turkey.

On the declaration of war against Russia the Turks had not obliged their ally. On 4th August, Britain joined France. After Turks signed their defensive treaty with Germany, The Russian government frightened, the Russian foreign minister suggested that Russia was prepared to guarantee the territorial integrity of Turkish empire, if it remained out of the war but Turkey took no decision. In November the straits were closed and Russia defeated.

The Turkish empire was disintegrated, Enver Pasha, the hero of the Young Turk Revolution and Jamal Pasha were too much worried that which bloc should Turkey join ‘the triple entente or Germany’ the Turks had no friend among them, the Germany helped them in the time of distress when other powers left them to their destiny, so Turkey made the alliance with Germany. Before Turkey was drawn into the war, the British government tried to probe Sheriff Hussein’s attitude in case Britain had to fight with the Turks. In the beginning Sheriff hesitated but after the war broke out he took a definite step. The Turks requested him for Jihad but the shrewd Sheriff pointed out that Jihad is not possible with the help of Christians. The Young Turks were very desperate being surrounded on all sides by actual and potential enemies.

In January 1915, Sir Henry MacMohan became the High Commissioner of Egypt. In February the Turkish army fought a bloody battle with British imperial army which was guarding the Suez Canal. On the other hand the Arabs revolted
against the Turks, they were tired of Turkish domination and plotted for freedom. The Arab wanted their language to be recognised and their culture preserved. The new Turks ruled out the possibility of a bi-lingual, bi-cultural state where they and Arabs could lived on the terms of equality. It was the only solution and some Arabs were prepared for it but some were against it and started their propaganda against the Turks because in an Arab-Turkish state domination was of Turks and discrimination was rampant. This repression and discrimination gave birth to Arab nationalism. Saving themselves from the Turkish authorities the Arabs requested Sheriff Hussein to lead the Arab nationalist movement. In the meantime the war broke out between Turkey and Britain, this war gave the Sheriff his opportunity, he appointed himself as the spokesman of Arab nationalism, with all the tenacity of old age he started negotiations with Britain. Britain carried out negotiations under exceptionally trying conditions. She was fighting for her empire, the defeat of Turkey at any price appears to have been the immediate objective of Britain. These were some of the considerations which led Britain to make large promises with Arabs and at the same time with France. The Arab nationalists made a written document known as the Damascus protocol, it contained a clear statement of the aims of the Arab nationalism, it also clearly defined the boundary of the state which it wished to create. The negotiations started on July 14, 1915, between British High Commissioner Henry Mac Mohan and Sheriff Hussein and called ‘Hussein-Mac Mohan correspondence’.

From these letters, Hussein appeared to believe that he had reached a precise understanding with Great Britain on the formation of Unified Arab state. Hussein also protested against the exclusion of the portions of Syria and Mersin, in reply the High Commissioner tried to define French interests in the excluded area, while he rejected the Anglo-French claims, Britain made him to discuss it after the war, on January 30, 1916, the correspondence had been closed. This correspondence only defined the boundaries of the state which the Arabs wanted to create, Britain was more interested in keeping the Suez Canal under her
control rather than the Turkish empire, France too had a similar interest of taking Syria and Palestine. The British interests in West Asia were well known, throughout the nineteenth century she tried to keep the Ottoman empire alive but her attitude radically changed in the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain maintained relations with France and Russia and developed hostility towards the Turks. Britain and France decided to share with Russia whatever they acquire from the dying Ottoman empire, but Russia did not negotiate with her allies. The famous or infamous Sykes-Picot Agreement which was signed between Britain and France on May 16, 1916, just 18 days before the Arabs rebelled against the Turkish rule was a proof of British and French intentions. This agreement was the distribution of the land of Turkish empire. The entente powers were keeping their eyes on dying Ottoman empire. France had her designs on Syria and Lebanon, Italy had some hopes of collecting titbits, Russia looked towards the Constantinople. The agreement was substantiated by a carefully drawn up map. The French and British areas of interest were respectively coloured blue and red. There was a brown area too consisting of Palestine, and it was decided that in Palestine there would be an international administration. This agreement was kept secret.

As soon as the war with Turkey had started, it had become important for Britain to secure Sheriff Hussein's support in order to reinforce war operations in the Arab countries. On the other hand the news of executions in Syria and the brutality of Turks had finally convinced the skeptical Feisal that nothing was to be gained by hanging, Hussein declared war against Turkey, this war was also known as the Arab revolt, accordingly begun on June 5, 1916. In November 1916, Hussein proclaimed himself the king of the Arab lands, but Britain and France recognised him only as the King of Hejaz, because Britain and French were of the view that the Arab revolt was an insignificant movement and it should not be allowed to spread beyond the coastal area of Hejaz.
Finally the Turks were on the edge of bankruptcy and were physically exhausted, it was a substantial achievement for the Arabs. A few days later the Arabs completely cut off the Turkey’s contacts with the red sea. In October 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia and the entente powers immediately published the Sykes-Picot Treaty. Disclosure of the Anglo-French plans of parceling out the Arab lands astounded the leaders of the Arab revolt, the pathetic faith of the Arabs in British character was shocked.

The exception which Britain claimed about Palestine was not clearly mentioned either in the correspondence or in any other official document. In Sykes Picot treaty Palestine was supposed to be placed under international control which was not welcomed either by Zionists or Britain. Supported by the Zionists Britain had to obtain an agreement with France. There was some delay in obtaining the agreement from France because France was unwilling to give her consent to the cancellation of the proposed internationalisation. In July 1917, Palestine was captured by the imperial forces and Arabs, Arab countries and territories, rich in oil had been seized. The secret wartime aims of Britain made it to conclude an agreement with Dr. Chaim Weizmann, a Jewish chemist, who was an expert of producing acetone for war efforts, he materially contributed to the British war efforts and attracted the attention of British officials to Zionist aspirations. The spring of 1917, brought two dramatic developments which proved decisive for the success of the Zionist cause, the first was Revolution in Russia, and second was America’s entry into the war. On November 2, 1917, the famous Balfour Declaration was made. This Declaration was the fulfillment of the homesickness of the Jews who had left this land centuries ago. The Balfour Declaration set the seal on Weizmann’s efforts, and gave the backing of a great power to Jewish immigration into Palestine. Britain’s undertaking to the Zionists was the concern for imperial communications and for defending the Suez canal which was the life line of trade and communications with India. After the Turkish defeat in Syria the Ottoman empire was completely collapsed and the whole area was
occupied by British troops with a small French force on the coast and the army of King Hussein in the interior. In Palestine there was a British military administration, in the coastal region North of Palestine a French provisional government, and in four cities of Aleppo, Homs, Hama and Damascus and East of Jordan, an Arab administration under Ameer Feisal, to whom a number of British and French officers were attached. At the end of the First World War, the Arabs expected the fulfillment of promises made to them by Britain, these consisted of various statements and declarations made during the war. The Arabs maintained that Palestine was included in the Hussein-Mac Mohan correspondence while the British said that it did not. Britain particularly wanted to safeguard its interests in India and Egypt by keeping hold on Palestine. French and Russian interests were dealt with specifically in the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916, which conflicted with the Mac Mohan correspondence in regard to the area and degree of Arab independence. Under its terms Russia was to have, besides Constantinople and a strip of territory on each side of the Bosphorus, the greater part of the four Turkish provinces adjacent to the Russian frontier. Russia laid no claim to any Arab territory, and recognised the claims of France and Britain in regard to them. As between themselves Britain and France agreed that there should be:

a) an international zone in Palestine,
b) a British zone of Basra and Baghdad,
c) a French zone of Syria (and Cilicia),
d) an independent Arab state or federation, between the British and French zones, divided into the British and French spheres of influence.

On January 30, 1919, the Peace Conference decided that the Arab provinces of the Ottoman empire should be wholly separated from Turkey, and announced the adoption for some of them of the mandate system, a kind of trusteeship, as a bridge to complete independence. Britain and France disagreed over the boundaries
of the mandated territories, but in September 1919, an agreement was reached between Britain and France whereby British troops were withdrawn from Syria (excluding Palestine) and from Cilicia, and replaced by Arab troops in the interior of Syria and by French troops on the coast and in Cilicia. On March 20, 1920, a congress of Syrian notables at Damascus offered the crown of Syria and Palestine to Feisal, who accepted it. This action was repudiated by the British and French governments, who subsequently at the Conference of San Remo (24 April 1920), received mandates: the French for Syria and Lebanon, the British for Palestine, with Transjordan, with the obligation to carry out the policy of the Balfour Declaration. This award was repudiated by Feisal. Subsequently the French Commander-in-Chief advanced in Syria and occupied Damascus. Feisal departed into exile, but later became King of Iraq.

The mandates for ‘Palestine’ and ‘Syria and Lebanon’ were formally approved by the Council of the League of Nations in July 1922 and became effective in September 1923. In 1924 the United States gave its concurrence to the mandates. With the final disintegration of the Ottoman empire, Western penetration became Western domination, and Arab nationalism, which had allied itself with Britain against the Turks, became the formula for resistance to Western economic and political power.

The Arab territories placed under mandate were dissatisfied with a political status inferior to that of less advanced countries such as Yemen and Hejaz. Nevertheless, except in Palestine, where there was an exceptional regime under international supervision, all the mandated territories made political progress between the wars, and one of them, Iraq, in 1932 attained independence. Egypt too, which when the First World War ended was a British protectorate, became independent in 1936.

Britain emerged from the post war settlements in a predominant position in West Asia. The British declaration for Palestine caused unceasing anxiety and
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conflict between Arabs and Jews. There were outbreaks of violence on the part of the Arabs, from 1920 onwards, there were several inquiries and white papers in regard to it. In 1937, a Royal Commission recommended the partition of Palestine between Arabs and Jews; in 1938 a Partition Commission found the proposal to be impracticable. Throughout the period, and specially after the Nazi brutality had begun to drive the Jews out of Germany, Palestine had difficulty every year about the number of Jewish immigrants to be admitted. Finally there was the British White Paper of 1939, providing for the cessation of Jewish immigration, except with Arab consent, when 75,000 more Jews should have been admitted, for a ten year scheme of preparation for self government, and for restriction on the acquisition of land by the Jews. This White Paper was rejected by the Arabs, and failed to secure approval of the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations.

One consequence of the British predominance was a tendency for the West Asian nationalists to look to rival powers for support. Fascist Italy was active in propaganda and political intrigue in West Asian countries, by 1939, extensive anti-British activities were being conducted from German and Italian missions and consulates in the West Asian region. Italian activities concentrated chiefly on Egypt and Red Sea coast of Arabia, particularly the Yemen, and they did not entirely cease after the signature of the Anglo-Italian Agreement of 16 April, 1938, 'regarding questions of mutual concern' in the West Asia. German activities were directed upon Turkey, Iraq and Iran.

With the outbreak of World War II, the actual defense of the area was a British responsibility. In a speech delivered in May 1941, Anthony Eden said that the British government would give full support to any scheme that commanded general approval among Arabs for strengthening the cultural, economic and political ties between the Arab countries. The Vichy regime in Syria was defeated by British and Free French forces, and replaced in July by a regime dependent on General De Gaulle. The Syrian and Lebanese independence, promised by the
Free French and confirmed by the British or their entry into Syria in June 1941 was formally recognised by the British government on 27 October (Syria) and on 26 December (Lebanon) 1941. In December 1942, Nuri-al-Said, Prime Minister of Iraq, brought forward a scheme for the unification of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Transjordan, with 'semi-autonomy' for the Jews in Palestine, as the first step towards the Arab unity. This proposal was not pursued, but a general Arab Conference met in Alexandria in September-October 1944, which was attended by representatives of the Government of Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, and by an observer on behalf of the Arabs of Palestine. The proceedings resulted in the foundation of the Arab League. By the end of World War II it had become plain that the status quo could not continue in Palestine. During and after the war the eyes of thousands of Jews who had suffered from Nazi persecution were turned towards Palestine, not only as containing the Jewish National Home but as their only place for refuge. Jewish demands enjoyed strong support in the United States, as President Truman made repeated requests to the British government to admit into Palestine forthwith 100,000 of the homeless Jews of Europe. The British government tried unsuccessfully to reach agreements with the United States government, with the Arabs, and with the Jews, and in February 1947, it referred the problem to the United Nations, to whom it gave warning on 26 September, that if no settlement acceptable to both Jews and Arabs could be found it would plan for the early withdrawal of British forces and British administration from Palestine. A United Nations plan for the partition of the territory was approved by the Assembly on November 29, but the Arab states refused to accept it. On May 14, 1948, the British mandate was abandoned and the last of the British troops withdrew from Palestine. On the same day the state of Israel was proclaimed: it was recognised immediately by the United States, followed closely by the Soviet Union. On May 15, the forces of Egypt, Jordan and Iraq began to invade Palestine. In spite of the efforts of the United Nations fighting did not finally stop until January 1949,
while the signature of armistice arrangements between Israel on one hand and Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon on the other, was not completed until July. No peace treaty has followed. In 1950, a tripartite declaration was issued by Britain, France and the United States, expressing readiness to supply the Arab states and Israel with arms for internal security and self-defense and to take action, both within and outside the United Nations', to prevent the violation by force of any West Asian frontier or armistice line. In November 1950, the Arab League decided to continue the war-time blockage of Israel, on the ground that an armistice did not constitute a state of peace.

The establishment of the state of Israel created a new political reality in the region. India did not recognise the establishment of the state of Israel because from the very beginning India opposed the partition plan. Nehru proposed the establishment of a federal Palestine with internal autonomy for the Jewish population, but his plan was rejected and the U.N. General Assembly voted in favour of the partition of Palestine. When the repercussions of the partition were felt then it was realised that India's proposal was best for the peaceful coexistence of both the Jews and Arabs.

b. The Suez Canal Crisis:

For centuries Egypt attained an important position in the commercial history of the world because of its geographical location. In ancient times the Phoenicians traded in the whole Mediterranean and established their centers in North Africa and Southern Europe. Same way they conquered the whole of North Africa and Spain. Later the Turks conquered most of the area from the Arabs, this way before the advent of modern times the Mediterranean was covered by different trade centers and empires. It has been a fortune and misfortune of Egypt that she lies between the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. Strategically Egypt is situated at the cross roads of the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. In
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this way it commands the approaches of three continents, it is generally believed that Egypt is the country where first Neolithic revolution took place which resulted in the development of trade and trade routes, since then Egypt has been one of the main centers of commercial activity in West Asia. Besides its strategic location, the most important physical feature of Egypt is the Isthmus of Suez lying between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, this feature made the traders and the merchants to think of Egypt as an easy passage. Caravans from the Levant in East and beyond would cross into Africa and from Africa into some of the Asian areas via the Isthmus. The Isthmus of Suez joined Africa to Asia, the tongue of the Red Sea licked up close to the Mediterranean waters, not so far in the West, the river Nile flowed and did indeed reach the Middle sea through its seven or eight delta channels, one of which— the Pelusiac— so entrancingly crossed the edge of Isthmus Before the growth of central empires of Greece and Rome, and the commercial development of Europe, access by shipping from the Red Sea to Western waters could not perhaps be regarded as a vital necessity, though it had its obvious uses. The earliest Egyptian canal builders were immediately concerned with providing a passage for vessels from the Red Sea to the great interior cities along the Nile.

Details of first navigable Canal linking the Nile with the Red Sea are lost in the mists of antiquity. Tradition claims that it was Sesostris, a Pharaoh of the twelfth Dynasty, who first set his hand to this enterprise. So it is remembered as the Canal of the Pharaohs. Sesostris’ Canal was silted up, and the next attempt was made by Pharaoh Necho (612 BC) who reopened it but soon he refilled it when he was warned by an oracle that he was preparing the way for the barbarian invader. Afterwards, Egypt was conquered by Persians. It was a Persian ruler, Darius Hystaspes. Who less than a century later in 521 BC resolved and enlarged the Canal of the Pharaohs. Subsequently, Darius, for a reason unknown destroyed the last section of the Canal but it was re-excavated by his successor Xerxes.
The Roman occupation of Egypt saw the Canal of the pharaohs converted in due course into the river of Trajan. The emperor Trajan (98 A.D) cleared out the old Canal which pass through so many vicissitudes, and gave it a better water supply by uniting it with the main stream of the Nile at the Babylon. With the Arab conquest of Egypt in the seventh century A.D the Nile Red Sea Canal entered on the last phase of its history by the permission of the Caliph Omar, Amri Governor of Egypt, re-opened the waterway in the winter of 641-642 A.D. It was finally closed in 776 A.D., by the order of the second Abbasid Caliph, Abu-Jaffar as a blockading measure against the revolted holy cities of Mecca and Medina. From this period commerce between East and West via Egypt steadily declined. Through the journey of Marco Polo and other travellers the Northern over land route to India and China was developed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries until the growth and aggressive power of the Turkey robbed the merchants of this avenue for the profitable traffic and brought to an end the commercial supremacy in Europe of the Venetians and Genoese which depended so largely on the Levant.

A new means of access to the East become a crying need in face of the Turkish barrier, the journey of Vasco-de-Gamma opened up an effective Ocean route to India and the Far East, with the opening up of this route the European powers showed their interests to gain the monopoly of trade. Among the European states France now held a leading position in the Eastern Mediterranean, and for geographical reasons her interest in the ancient commercial route through Egypt was bound to be greater than of any other country. France was concerned to re-open the old route through Egypt, and so to deal a heavy blow at the Cape commerce. France did not immediately contemplate the annexation of Egypt, her government contended itself with negotiating treaties with the Beys, which would have the effect of giving her merchants transport facilities through the country.
It was evident that the power of Turkey in Egypt was weakening, and it only required that the government of that country be replaced by one more amenable or controlled by one of the Western power, to make immediately practicable the construction of the Suez Canal, either by cutting through the Isthmus or restoring the ancient indirect Nile-Red Sea system. The advocacy of a Suez Canal, mainly and naturally by the French, had been going on continuously, so the matters stood when the war broke out between England and France in 1793. To give England a lesson France decided to capture Egypt. Napoleon landed his forces at Alexandria and occupied the country. After the French occupation it was obvious that Egypt could no longer be a matter of unconcern to European governments. The geo-strategic location diverted the attention of Britain toward the Egypt. Hence forth Britain adopted a defensive policy, so that no other power could get preponderant influence in Egypt. This policy of Britain can be understood in the context of Eastern Question, because Britain’s main policy was to maintain the integrity of the Ottomans empire. So that the balance of power in Europe could remain intact as France, Russia and Austria were trying to take advantage of the declining Ottomans empire. Britain also wanted to maintain the security of her Eastern dominions specially India for this purpose she regarded effective maintenance of Ottoman suzerainty over Egypt as the best guarantee of continuous security of her empire in the East.

Whatever ingenious the power might have for the future of Egypt, the event which brought about the most radical and far reaching change in Egypt’s internal administration was the rise to power of Muhammad Ali, an Albanian Colonel, nominally he was serving the Sultan of Turkey.

Under Muhammad Ali Egypt awakened from her long sleep and became a factor to be reckoned with in world affairs. In his political sympathies he on the whole favored the French and every opportunity was afforded to French experts to come in and assist him in his schemes of construction and organisation.
England now became really anxious about the Egyptian route to India, and concerned to maintain the existence of the Ottoman empire as a bulwark against the intentions of any other European power to deprive her of the use of this route. It was lieutenant Thomas Waghorn, who was the first to demonstrate practically the advantages of the route to India through Egypt, in 1830, Waghorn had tested this route by journeying from London to Bombay.

After the Napoleon's expedition to Egypt various schemes of piercing the Isthmus was put forward in Muhammad Ali's time by French sponsors but none of the schemes proceeded farther than the stage of discussion due to the strong British opposition. From the British point of view it became obvious that such a canal would create a physical barrier against the march of the Turkish armies into Egypt. It would encourage and sustain Egyptian independence of Constantinople and therefore it would defeat the basic aim of the British policy towards Egypt. Lord Palmerstone the then British Foreign Secretary believed that the peace of Europe and the safety of the British people unquestionably lay in opposing the project of the Suez Canal. He said that the cutting of the canal would sooner or later lead to the occupation of Egypt. In order to prevent the route falling wholly into the hands of the rivals the British government adopted after 1842 a definite line of action. As an alternative to the Suez Canal project Palmerstone advocated a railway project from Alexandria to Suez, which he concluded would not alter the geo-political status of Egypt, in the least and would produce no international complications.

In 1847, Mr. Barret, the French Consul General in Egypt told Muhammad Ali that if Egypt should one day become a greatest route between Europe and India, it would be better that it should be opened by means of a canal to the ships of all European nations who would naturally control it. Than by the construction of a railway which would make the passage through Egypt the monopoly of England. Palmerstone in a dispatch to Mr. Murray, the British
Consul General in Egypt wrote that the Austrian interests in the canal were commercial but the French interests were political in that it would place them as a military and naval power in the Mediterranean much nearer to India than the English would be.

Muhammad Ali was then on one hand under the pressure of Britain to build a railroad and on the other was under the pressure of France and Austria to build a canal. The result was that he kept on putting off taking a decision for fear of antagonising either side. He had not yet reached a decision when he died in 1849, and was succeeded by his grandson Abbas Pasha. Abbas Pasha being an Anglophile expelled all French advisors and appointed the British ones.

Muhammad Ali gave the country a new life and though he recognised the importance of a canal, he refused to jeopardise the country's future by granting permission for its construction. Ferdinand de Lesseps was a French consular official in Egypt, but he received no encouragement from Muhammad Ali. At Constantinople British influence was very strong and Lord Palmerstone opposed the canal idea because he feared that if it materialised it would increase the influence of France in the West Asia. Under British pressure Sultan Abdul Aziz withheld permission, he refused to oblige the Egyptian Viceroy about the Suez Canal. There are two facts which are noticeable in order to have a clear picture of the way Suez Canal concession was obtained by de Lesseps. Firstly, since October 23, 1853, the Turkish empire was at war with Russia; the Crimean war was now on preoccupation of the two Western powers and Turkey with Russian menace gave Egypt freedom of action. Secondly, Abbas Pasha died and Muhammad Said became the new Viceroy of Egypt in 1854, it was a turning point in the history of the Suez Canal, because the Frenchman de Lesseps was a friend of Said and it revived the French influence. Lesseps succeeded in convincing Said about the utility and importance of the Suez Canal scheme. At the height of the Crimean war, de Lesseps obtained on November 30, 1854, a
preliminary concession by a firman of Said. It authorised de Lesseps to form a *Compagnie Universelle du Canal Maritime de Suez*. It followed by a second firman on August 5, 1856, the concession provided a solid ground to Lesseps for the excavation of the canal, and the great project began to emerge from the realm of pure speculation to reality. The news of the concession was ill received by Britain and hectic diplomatic activities started. The British government headed by Palmerstone opposed the scheme tooth and nail for fear of French pretensions in Egypt. Britain used all its influence in Constantinople to prevent the Sultan from giving his approval to the concession. The result was that the British opposition led to the delay of more than a decade in the ratification of the concession.

Said died and before his death it was decided in the concessions between him and de Lesseps that France should have 400,000 shares, Britain entitled 80,000 shares, and Egypt 177,642 shares. In 1862, Said had to borrow money from foreign money lenders at 8% interest rate, after his death in 1863, Ismail Pasha became the new Viceroy, and he greatly complicated de Lesseps' task. Finally having overcome most of the difficulties, de Lesseps secured a new convention with Ismail in January 1866. In this convention Article 16 was a new provision which stated that the Compagnie Universalle was an Egyptian corporation and as such was to be subject to the laws and customs of the country. The concession was to last for 99 years, but the date of expiry was to count from the day when the Canal was opened for navigation, after the lapse of the concession, it was to be an Egyptian property.

On November 17, 1869, the Canal was opened, the inauguration of the Canal celebrated in the presence of many crowned heads of Europe and European statesmen, and was a moment of great personal triumph for de Lesseps. By that time the British attitude towards the Canal was radically changed, instead of opposing it Britain became very much interested in the Canal as a commercial and strategic route. Ismail as inherited a sizeable debt from the time of Said,
spent lavishly, he borrowed from foreign money lenders at an usurious rate. At the verge of bankruptcy, Ismail in 1875, decided to sell his share, put up 176,602 shares of Suez canal company valued at four million pounds for sale. Disraeli, the Prime Minister of Britain promptly decided to purchase them. Lacking parliamentary authorisation (Parliament was then in recess) he borrowed 100,000,000 francs from the banking house of Rothschild. Thus one of the boldest financial and political transaction in the world history was made. This purchase of shares made Britain an important share holder, although the majority of shares still belonged to France and politically the Canal was under the Turkish-Egyptian sovereignty. The year 1877, was a very bad year for Egypt, due to low rain fall the Nile did not rise, the country went through a severe famine, taxes could not be collected. By the end of the year there was so much suffering that even the foreigners expected something unusual to happen. Ismail was forced to appoint a commission of inquiry, he appointed de Lesseps as the head, the commission reported extensive reforms not only in finances but also in the composition of the government. The British and French government wanted to grab the canal but Ismail was a great hindrance to their plan, after a few months Ismail was exiled and his successor Taufiq was very much aware of the dual control of France and Britain and he knew what was actually expected of him, but found his position undermined by a movement which began as an Army Mutiny, led by Colonel Ahmad Arabi. It soon became a powerful movement against the European dual control, Arabi, now virtually at the head of the affairs, was weak and indecisive. In 1882 conditions deteriorated and Egypt became a British protectorate.

The Constantinople Convention of 1888: The British government was quite ready and indeed anxious, to enter into guarantees with the other powers to preserve the freedom of the Canal for the passage of all ships in any circumstance. But she desire to preserve the right to defend the Canal from an act of aggression against Egypt so long as the necessity for her present occupation of the country continued. This was by no means acceptable to the
powers primarily interested. Negotiations dragged on until 1888, on October 29, 1888, the Suez Canal Convention was signed by France, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Spain, Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Russia and Turkey in Constantinople also known as Constantinople Convention, defining the international status of the Canal. The signatories pledged not to violate this provision and never to subjected the Canal to a blockade. The Constantinople Convention proclaimed the principle of free navigation in the Canal for all nations. The signing of the Convention of 1888, might have been thought to have terminated the Suez Canal controversy. Both France and Russia, France in particular, was dissatisfied with the prolonged British occupation of Egypt. It was felt that England was steadily taking over the rights of the Ottoman empire as Egyptian suzerain. The outbreak of First World War, effectively put an end to any questions affecting the future status of the Canal. Its security became a more urgent matter.

Egypt was willy-nilly a belligerent on the side of Britain against the central powers, in view of the British military occupation. The pro-German Khedive Abbas Hilmi was at Constantinople at the time, his Prime Minister, Hussein Rushdie Pasha, was acting as regent, Rushdie realised that nothing could be gained by defying Great Britain.

During the war Britain freely used the Canal for her own purposes. Towards the end of October 1914, the Turkish government sent a note to the British embassy declaring that Egypt was and would always be considered an integral part of the Ottoman empire. In November 1914, turkey openly joined the central powers and Britain declared a state of war between herself and the Ottoman empire. At the end of the war, Egypt was severed from its Turkish suzerain and transformed into a British protectorate. The Egyptians were more or less opposed to the British occupation. A nationalist feeling was increasing and Egypt planned for independence, self determination was the slogan, these slogans were vocal before the war but now they organised themselves into the Wafd. The
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Wafd forced Great Britain to abolish the protectorate, though with certain reservations. In 1922, the British protectorate over Egypt was (nominally) terminated and Egypt was declared an independent sovereign state, the same time Ahmad Fuad succeeded Hussein Kamil and became King Fuad with Wafdist Zaghlul Pasha as Prime Minister. But Britain did not lose command over Egypt, it declared, a) security of the communications of British empire in Egypt, b) the defense of Egypt against all foreign aggression or interference, direct or indirect. The British forces remained in Egypt and the British High Commissioner continued to act. The successive British governments remained adamant on these reserved questions.

In 1924, when the Labour party came into power in Britain and Ramsay MacDonald became the Prime Minister, the Wafdists hoped for some modifications and made some specific demands like the withdrawal of British troops, withdrawal of financial and judicial advisors, no interference in Egyptian affairs, renunciation of Great Britain of her claim to protect the Suez Canal.

As regards the Canal it was suggested that its protection should be given to the League of Nations and Mr. MacDonald made it clear that the 'proposals are unacceptable'. Anglo-Egyptian negotiations dragged on for years, never reaching an agreement on all the points, draft treaties were prepared and rejected. But with the passage of time Britain's position in West Asia was seriously threatened by Germany and Italy.

Meanwhile King Fuad died and succeeded by his sixteen year old son Farouk I, the passing of King Fuad gave the Wafd a new opportunity to reassert itself in Egyptian politics. In May 1936, Nahas Pasha the then Prime Minister formed an all Wafd cabinet, one of the first steps of the new government, and asked Great Britain for the renewal of negotiations to replace the status quo by a treaty. Britain was anxiously looking for an opportunity to make her relations better with Egypt to strengthen its position in West Asia in view of the Italian
and German menace, the differences were hurriedly adjusted and on August 26, 1936, the treaty was ratified by Egyptian Parliament. Britain was now more evidently an ally of Egypt rather than her protector. British troops were to continue on the Egyptian soil, but only to the time the Egyptian army was not strong enough to take over full responsibilities. Egypt was definitely marked down as a prey, Mussolini had great designs over Egypt. Italy was to oust Britain from Egypt because the Italians feel that their East African empire would never be safe as long as another power commands the Suez Canal.

The Second World War began on September 1, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland, on 2nd Italy proclaimed her neutrality, on 3rd Great Britain and France declared war on Germany, on the collapse of France, Italy declared war on Great Britain and France. The axis leaders were in a state of elation, Hitler was thinking in terms of continents now, and Africa had become a key to everything whether in strategy or in economy, he had decided to seize Gibraltar and Suez without further delay. At the same time Hitler discussed with the chief of his naval staff the further implications of this strategy, 'the Suez Canal must be taken, it is doubtful whether Italians can accomplish it alone or support by German troops will be needed. An advance from Suez through Palestine and Syria as far as turkey is necessary, if we reach that point Turkey will be in our power.'

The position of the British forces in the Canal zone was both diplomatically awkward and strategically dangerous. A state of siege had been declared over the whole of the Canal area. Though the Mediterranean itself was closed to allied merchant shipping for a considerable time, the facilities at Suez were quite unable to cope with the huge convoys that began to reach the Gulf. This presented a major problem for the navy, but the vulnerability to air of the concentration of ships that might be waiting at Suez, made this process the safest one. It was generally expected that Italy would at once attack by air. The Canal
was immune to damage by high explosives, so the only danger was mining. The Italo-German threat to Egypt and the Suez Canal, built up over a long period, and it was of course the German hand in bombing the Canal that had so completely changed the defense situation. In the first raids the Germans employed magnetic mines, but it was difficult to plot the mines that did fall in the Canal. On March 3, 1940, six enemy aircrafts succeeded in dropping twelve mines into the Canal, and a week later a further eight, shipping came to a standstill. With the elimination of Italy the Mediterranean was once more open for convoys. Once again in chequered history of Egypt and the Suez Canal a dream of domination had brought disaster to the aggressor. But the experience of the Second World War had been very revealing as to the attitude of the great powers towards the Canal.

Britain’s de facto control of the Suez Canal obtained judicial confirmation by the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. the Article 8 of the treaty stated that the Canal was ‘an integral part of Egypt’ but that Britain was entrusted with the task of its defense. It would be recalled from chapter XI, that Britain was authorised to keep 10,000 soldiers and 400 pilots in the Canal zone apart from technical and administrative personnel. At the time of this treaty no one raised the problem of its compatibility with the Constantinople Convention of 1888, and it was assumed that the Convention remained in force. It should be noted that at no time did British assume direct responsibility for the administration of the Canal traffic, which was left entirely to the company and at no time did they deprive the Egypt of her traditional right as the sovereign power to exercise, police, customs and sanity control over the Canal and the adjacent area.

After the war Egypt had asked for the revision of the treaty of 1936, and for this purpose embarked upon negotiations with Britain, negotiations failed and led to the placing of Anglo-Egyptian dispute before the United Nations in 1947,
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in the discussions the Security Council failed to reach any decision and the legal status of the Canal remained unchanged.

The Palestinian war of 1948, brought the Suez Canal once again to the fore in the international Affairs. Egypt, as a belligerent applied various restrictive measures against enemy ships and against neutral ships carrying contraband of war. These measures were based on Military Proclamation no. 5, issued by Egyptian government in the early summer of 1948, and instituted a regime of inspection of ships in Alexandria, soon followed by further regulations concerning customs inspection and prize courts, did not differ from similar decrees issued. Although these measures interfered with the normal navigation through the Suez Canal, no protests were raised by foreign powers, it was silently admitted that Egypt was at war with Israel, and her rights to adopt measures of self defense did not violate the Suez Canal Convention of 1888. The Egypt Israel Armistice concluded at Rhodes on February 24, 1949, it put an end to hostilities and a new era of peaceful co-existence for two states. Egypt relaxed her control over Canal shipping but did not abolish them altogether. Britain annoyed when in July 1951, an Egyptian corvette detained a British Freighter, Empire Roach, in the Gulf of Akaba, although not directly connected with Suez Canal traffic this incident contributed to the deterioration of the already strained relations between Egypt and the major maritime powers and proved to be a turning point in their attitude towards Egypt.

Profiting from this state of mind, Israel on July 12, 1951, brought a complaint against the Egypt before the U.N. Security Council. Israel's complaint included three points-

a) Egypt had violated international law by exercising the rights of belligerency in time of peace.
b) Egypt had violated the armistice of February 20, 1949.
c) Egypt had violated the Suez Canal Convention of 1888.
In the Security Council the Egyptian delegate defended his country's behavior by repudiating each of the three contentions. He argued, that the armistice was not yet a peace treaty and that Egypt was therefore still technically at war with Israel. Consequently, she was entitled to exercise the rights of a belligerent. Moreover, the Egyptian delegate asserted that Israel had violated the armistice by expelling peaceful Arab population across the Egyptian border, by raiding certain localities in the neutral frontier zone, and by illegally attacking Egyptian territory. Then he asserted that the Convention of 1888, specially allowed Egypt to take self protective measures, in the Canal zone, and that despite these measures freedom of navigation through the Canal remained unimpaired, the volume of traffic actually increasing by leaps and bounds.

In consequence of this and numerous protests arising from Egyptian interference with shipping the United States, Great Britain and France on August 16th introduced a joint resolution in the Security Council requesting Egypt to end the blockade at the Suez Canal of Israel bound vessels on the ground that such actions was unjustified and inconsistent with the 'permanent character' of the armistice regime. The Egyptian response declared that the armistice had not ended the state of hostilities and that Egypt, acting in self defense, had not violated the Suez Canal Convention of 1888. Although on September 1, the Security Council holding that Egyptian interference with Canal shipping was unjustified on various grounds, called upon the state to terminate the restriction on the passage of international commercial shipping and goods through the Suez Canal wherever bound, its admonition went unheeded, with the sympathy of the Soviet Union and the encouragement of the other Arab states Egypt pushed steadily ahead with measures designed completely to eliminate British control of Suez waterway. In October, 1951, Nahas Pasha presented to the Parliament a series of decrees unilaterally abrogating the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian treaty, providing for the eviction of the British troops from the Canal zone, reuniting Sudan with Egypt and
proclaiming Farouk, King of Egypt and Sudan, on October 15, the decrees were unanimously approved by the Parliament. A wave of anti-British riots following these decisions failed to induce the British to leave the Canal zone.

The excitement produced by the denunciation of the Anglo-Egyptian treaty led to an ever increasing number of incidents between the British forces and Egyptians in the Canal zone. On January 19, 1952, Ismailia an important town and base on the Canal, became the scene of mass fighting which ended six days later in British occupation of the town. The Ismailia incident inspired major riots in Cairo on January 26. The Toll was 552 wounded and 26 killed after the day of rioting. This was indeed a black day in Cairo. King Farouk traditionally hostile to Wafd, sees this opportunity summarily to dismiss Nahas Pasha and his Cabinet, and appointed in his place a veteran Ali Maher Pasha, the subsequent six months so considerable turbulence and the anti-Wafdist cabinet had to face either a hostile Wafd dominated Parliament or after its dissolution on March 29, a dangerous political vacuum. This vacuum was abruptly filled by a new dynamic force, when at the dawn of July 23, 1952 a Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), composed of eleven young officers, assumed supreme authority in the country. The ostensible leader Major General Naguib became Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, while Ali Maher Pasha was made Premier, on July 26, Major Naguib handed to King Farouk an ultimatum to renounce the throne and leave the country forthwith. Farouk signed an act of abdication in favour of his infant son Ahmad Fuad II and on the same day left Egypt for Italy. On August 2, a regency council was formed. It consisted of three men, Prince Mohammad Abdul Moneim, Bahieddin Barakat, and Let. Colonel Rashad Mehama representing the RCC. This new regime was more effective in destroying the old reforms. On December 10, 1952, the RCC abrogated the 1923 Constitution and on January 23, 1953, it appointed a fifty man committee to redraft the Constitution. Simultaneously, the RCC underwent a number of internal readjustments, some of a very dramatic character. As was later revealed, General Naguib had not
belonged to original group of officers. The real leader of the movement was Let. General Abdul Nasser, who resented the gradual usurpation of power by Naguib. Nasser replaced Naguib as Prime Minister and President of the RCC. When new constitution began to operate Nasser became the President, in Foreign policy the new government could boast of a number of achievements. Although it inherited from the previous regime two major unsettled issues—those of the Suez and the Sudan, the first issue was resolved soon when on December 19, 1955, Sudan claimed independent, Egypt, England, Soviet Union and the United States promptly recognised this decision. On the other hand, by the end of 1954, Egypt's relations with the Western powers suffered principally on account of Baghdad Pact. Though enjoying dictatorial powers, Gamal Abdul Nasser and his associates could not safely disregard public opinion, which was so opposed to any foreign pact. Consequently, for the sake of his position at home, Nasser with Indian Prime Minister emerged as the principle champion of a 'no pact' policy on behalf of the Arabs.

One of the cherished objectives of the Cairo Revolutionary Regime had been the construction of a new high dam above Aswan near the Sudanese border. Such a dam would harness enough Nile water to provide the delta with all the electric power it needs and increase the cultivable area of Egypt by some two million acres. Egypt's interest in the dam gained momentum in the fall of 1955, following the arms deal with the Soviets. In October of that year Moscow expressed its willingness to come to the aid of Egypt in this connection. On December 15, 1955, the United States declared to lend Egypt $56,000,000 for the first stage of the Aswan dam. Britain followed with an offer of $14,000,000. These offers were made with an understanding that 'counterpart' funds would be laid aside for construction by Egypt herself. Further conditions of Western aid included Egypt's granting priority to this project over other schemes and non-acceptance of Soviet aid. Nasser delayed the Soviet offer because he expected that a more concrete Soviet offer might come forth. In the meantime the controlled
Egyptian press carried a vituperative campaign against the U.S. and the West for their sponsorship of the Baghdad Pact, their interference with the sovereign right of the Egypt to buy arms where she pleases, their partiality to Israel and their alleged over all hostility to Arab national aspirations.

At the same time the Egyptian news papers repeatedly hinted that a Soviet aid was in the making, but the expected Soviet offer did not materialise. Consequently, in mid July Nasser sent his ambassador to Washington to accept the American offer, when he arrived in Washington from Cairo, with dismay and shock he learned from Secretary Dulles that the American offer had been withdrawn.

Nasser's reaction to the news was both sudden and violent, angry at what he called an insult to Egypt's dignity on July 26, 1956, he issued a decree nationalising the Suez Canal Company, the revenues from the Canal were to be used for the Aswan dam project and navigation through the Canal by a new measure. The countries most effected by the nationalisation were France and Britain. Who owned the majority of the Company's stock. The reactions of the British and French governments were quick, sharp and vehement, they denounced the move. Consequently both London and Paris condemned Nasser's action in the strongest terms possible. Britain blocked Egyptian accounts in London. The United States attitude was different, neither American holdings nor her prestige was directly involved. With an eye to the broader issues of American-Arab relations, it was believed that some modus vivendi could be established with Egypt's leader. The three governments held an urgent consultation in London on August 2, 1956, and announced a plan to hold a 24 nation conference including India. The three powers held the view that the Egyptian act of nationalisation was not such an act, but an arbitrary and unilateral seizure by one nation of an international agency. They alleged that the act threatened the freedom and security of the Canal guaranteed by the 1888 Convention.5
The reaction of the Government of India to the Egyptian act was just opposite that of the Western governments, on August 17, 1956, Nehru voiced promptly and authentically that "the nationalisation of the Suez Canal was 'symptomatic' of the weakening of the domination of European powers over West Asia which had lasted for over a hundred years, Asia is on the march and is emerging to take its rightful place in the world affairs." The anxiety felt in the European countries was due to European oil interests in West Asia and the fact that their economies are based on oil. The old relationship between the West Asian countries and the Europe was changing and ought to change but the question was whether it would change through war or through peaceful means. The problem was not solved by peaceful means, the gulf between the Asian and European powers would widen. Therefore, Nehru pointed out that "a grave crisis had developed as a consequence of the Egyptian nationalisation, repercussions thereto which, if not resolved peacefully could lead to conflict' the extent and effects of which, it is not easy to assess..." in this situation the foremost consideration must he to strive for a calmer atmosphere and a rational outlook. The Anglo-French threats to settle the dispute or to enforce their views in the matter by display or use of force was the wrong way. Nehru deeply regretted these reactions and measures and expressed the hope that they would cease and the parties would seek a peaceful settlement. Regarding the invitation to the London Conference, the Government of India objected on the exclusion of many countries from the list of invitees. Indian government only agreed when it sought assurance from the Anglo-French governments that they would not injure the interests or the sovereign rights and dignity of Egypt. The London Conference was held during 16-23 August 1956, with 24 states participating. India was invited by U.K. to attend the Conference and the Indian delegation was led by Krishna Menon. The Government of India had given careful consideration of all aspects of the Suez Canal question and remained in touch with Egypt and other interested countries, such as Burma and Yugoslavia which were signatories to the
Suez Convention of 1888. At the London Conference Menon put forth the Indian plan, which had the following proposals;

a) Recognition of sovereign rights of Egypt,
b) Recognition of Suez Canal as an integral part of Egypt and a waterway of international importance,
c) Free and uninterrupted navigation for all nations in accordance with the 1888 Convention,
d) Tolls and charges should be equitable and the facilities of the interway should be available to all countries without discrimination,
e) The interests of the users of the Canal should receive due recognition.

The London Conference failed to find solution to Suez crisis. The Western plan suggested setting up of a Canal Users Association which would collect all transit dues and pay appropriate share to Egypt. The Western proposals called ‘the Dulles plan’ were not acceptable to Nasser because the Dulles plan proposed internationalisation of the Canal. Nasser described the recommendations as ‘collective colonialism’, the imposition of the authority of a group of nations over Egypt. Instead he accepted ‘the Menon plan’. The Dulles plan proposed that Egypt would have the sovereign rights of ownership over the Suez Canal, but she would not be permitted to exercise those rights i.e., Egypt should delegate those rights to an international authority. Some seven Muslim countries including Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, which were known as the ‘Western bloc’ backed the Dulles plan.

In September Nehru paid a three day official visit to Saudi Arabia on the invitation of King Saud. There Nehru discussed the Suez question with the Saudi Monarch. At the end of the meeting it was announced that Krishna Menon would visit Cairo at the invitation of President Nasser, King Saud and Prime Minister Nehru issued a joint communiqué urging for a negotiated settlement of the Suez crisis. In the meantime Nehru sent messages to Eden and Eisenhower urging them
for a peaceful settlement of the Suez Crisis. Both of them sent replies endorsing his suggestion. Nehru sent another message to Eden indicating India's stand on the crisis, while President Eisenhower remained in touch with Nehru on the Suez question, but it soon became clear that Dulles viewed the Canal primarily a dues collecting agency on behalf of Egypt, so Britain and France disappointed over it brought the matter before the United Nations Security Council on September 23, 1956. Nehru welcomed the reference of the Suez question to the Security Council by Britain and France.

The Security Council passed unanimously on October 13, 1956, the first part of an Anglo-French draft resolution (the second part being vetoed by the Soviet Union) which stated that any settlement of the Suez question should meet the following six requirements: free and open transit, respect for Egyptian sovereignty, insulation from the politics of any country, tolls to be fixed by agreement between Egypt and the users, a fair proportion of the dues to be allotted to developments, and unsolved disputes between Egypt and the Suez Canal Company to be settled by arbitration. India was therefore doubly pleased at the Security Council resolution; that as Nehru said, "we are definitely now in the negotiating stage and it is difficult to go back on it."

But the Security Council resolutions were inconclusive and did not result in any censure of the Egyptian action. The two governments of France and Britain in mid October began consulting each other with a view of taking punitive action against Egypt. On October 25, 1956, Egypt concluded a tripartite agreement with Syria and Jordan setting up of a unified command for the three armies under Egyptian direction. Israel's exclusion from the use of the canal, although was not a new phenomenon, aggravated the tense situation, the situation became more acute when Egyptian Fidayeens stepped up raids into the Israeli territory. On October 29, 1956, the Israeli forces invaded Egypt, divided into four columns landed within forty miles of the Suez Canal, they occupied Gaza Strip, ejected Egyptians from the coast of the Gulf of Akaba, took a strong hold on Sharm-al-Sheikh and
penetrated deep into Sinai peninsula. Quantities of Egyptian arms and war equipments fell into Israeli hands. Israel’s military action provoked multifarious reactions through out the world. On October 30, 1956, Britain and France addressed an ultimatum to the belligerents, demanding the cessation of hostilities and the withdrawal of their forces twenty miles from both sides of the Suez Canal within the next twelve hours. And if the belligerents did not comply then the U.K. and France declared they would intervene. As a self appointed guardian of peace, Britain and France claimed that their action was motivated by solicitude for the safety and availability of the Suez Canal. In reality their ultimatum had rewarded the aggressor. On receiving the ultimatum Nasser discussed the situation with Nehru through the Indian Ambassador in Egypt Mr. Rajwade. Nasser had rejected the ultimatum. At the expiry of the dead line of the ultimatum Israel accepted it on the condition that Egypt accept it as well. That Egypt refused earlier. On the same day the British and French bombers began to attack Port Said and other military targets in Egypt. Nasser spoke of his determination to fight all the three aggressors, if necessary. On November 1, 1956, Nehru’s message of support reached Nasser. India sent a note of protest to the High Commissioner of United Kingdom. The note mentioned that the aerial bombing of Egyptian territory was against “all considerations of humanity and was bound to stir the feelings of all countries very deeply, particularly in the countries of Asia and Africa.” On November 5th, the Franco British paratroopers captured Port Said.

In the meantime, the outside world was following two separate lines of action, collective and individual, Russia and United States acting individually, expressed their views on the crisis. In a series of notes and statements Russia proposed that a Soviet States force be sent to Egypt to stop the fighting, warned Britain, France and Israel against the continuation of aggression. On its part the United States warned Russia that it would oppose any Soviet use of force in the West Asian region. At the same time Washington pressed for a cease-fire and early evacuation of Egypt by the aggressor forces under the auspices of United
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Nations. Seeing this the General Assembly passed a resolution on November 7th, calling for the evacuation by aggressor forces under the supervision of a special United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF).

Nehru addressed the Lok Sabha on November 16, 1956, and spoke in length regarding the attack on Egypt. He said that the aggression had come as a shock. It was a flagrant case of "aggression by two strong powers against a weaker country." Nehru was both annoyed and disappointed with the United Kingdom. In spite of this, he refused to consider India's withdrawal from the Commonwealth as a mark of protest against the British action. To him the Commonwealth acted as an instrument of peace and it was good not for India, but also for the United Kingdom.

India clarified that UNEF would not be the occupying force, but would only assist the observer corps on the Armistice line between Egypt and Israel. Its work would be supervision and not forcing evacuation. Twenty four nations offered to contribute troops to the UNEF. Out of these the Secretary General chose only ten countries. The total strength of UNEF was 5,777 out of which India's share was 957. With the stationing of the UNEF troops in Egypt, the immediate task of peace-keeping was solved. By December 22nd, 1956, the last British and French troops had withdrawn from Egyptian territory. On April 9, 1957, the Canal was declared clear for navigation. After the clearance of the Suez Canal the issue that confronted the users of the Canal and the Suez Canal Company was the terms regarding its future administration. And the amount of compensation to be paid. This problem was solved when on 24 April, 1957, Egypt sent a letter to the Secretary General containing terms it had set before the Suez Canal Company and which had been accepted by the latter. In the document Egypt promised free navigation in accordance with the provisions of the 1888 Constantinople Convention. The Suez Canal authority set up by Egypt on 26 July, 1956, would be in charge of collection of tolls. Out of the tolls collected, Egypt
would be given five percent of the all gross receipts as royalty. Besides this, the Suez Canal authority would establish a capital and development fund in which twenty five percent of all gross receipts would be paid for further development of the Canal. The document further recommended that any complaints or cases of discrimination would be solved by a tribunal consisting of three members. One member was to be nominated by Egypt, one by the complainant and one by both in agreement with each other. In case of disagreement the International Court of Justice (ICJ) would recommend the third member. On the question of compensation it recommended that unless agreed between the parties concerned the issue would be referred in arbitration to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).20

The Egypt's decision to nationalise the Canal Company come closely in the wake of Nehru's meeting with Nasser in Brioni and Cairo, was a visible embarrassment for India. Nehru took the earliest opportunity to inform the Indian Parliament that his discussion with Nasser was never in relation with Suez Canal. India's deep concern about the Suez dispute was the result of practical considerations, no less than its anxiety to promote stability and peace in the area. India believed that the blatant British and French threats to use force against Egypt gravely prejudiced the prospects of negotiated settlement. The Indian approach took full account of the fact that under Constantinople Convention of 1888, the Suez Canal formed an integral part of Egypt and a settlement of the Suez dispute must be sought within the framework of this acknowledged principle. But India's further efforts for a peaceful settlement were cut short by the Israeli invasion of Egypt which was followed by landing of British and French troops in the Canal zone. Nehru, bluntly described it as a 'naked aggression' and a reversion of the past colonial methods. When the matter was reached to the United Nations, India played an active role there, in the withdrawal of foreign troops from Egyptian soil and in indicating Egypt's sovereign rights.
India, in accordance with her policy of peaceful co-existence made concerted efforts to counsel moderation on all sides and to help resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of Egypt and Canal users. The Anglo-French-Israeli aggression on Egypt evoked a sharp reaction in India, it considered the invasion as an illustration of 'an old, familiar evil,' a revival of 'old style colonialism'. India played a conciliatory and constructive role throughout the Suez crisis. It also played an important role in the United Nations in securing the withdrawal of the British-French and Israeli forces from the Egyptian soil, for India the major issue was whether it was right and proper for the great powers to try to impose their will over small and weak powers.

c. The Politics of Oil:

West Asia covers an area of some six and a half million square kilometers, located at the crossroads of the world between East and the West and at the juncture of three continents. The region is well known to the outside world because of the intrinsic complexities of both its internal oil and external politics. The discovery of oil in this area presented many problems and made the scene more chaotic, this discovery played an important role in the international affairs, it was here that great power interests clashed.

In the global context, oil and its products account for more than half the physical volume of the world trade. Oil is not only the most important item of the world commerce, it is also a strategic commodity. The economic and military machines of the developed countries run on oil which, in most cases, is imported from the Gulf. Until recently, the Western Europe was the principle consumer of the Gulf oil, but the growing gap between the world supply and demand in the early 1970s, brought in, the United States, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as new customers. The ever increasing and insatiable demand for petroleum products based upon the compelling needs of this highly industrialised and mechanised age made the West Asia economically a more strategic area than it
has ever been in the past, the great wealth of oil coupled with its importance to the rest of the world has had profound effect upon the people and the states of the West Asia early in the twentieth century, the prospects of finding oil in the Ottoman empire began to interest the great oil companies of Europe and the United States and the governments of the great powers. Foreign concession hunters sought to secure control of Turkish petroleum deposits which became an added source of international rivalry.

The rise of oil to the central position in the world’s energy picture was relatively a new phenomenon. At the beginning of the twentieth century, coal occupied the dominant position; at the onset of First World War, as much as 75 percent of the world’s energy consumption came from coal. Coal’s preferred position deteriorated rapidly during the next 40 years, however, as more and more oil was found in exploitable locations. Oil gradually surpassed coal as the world’s dominant energy source. The amazing impact of oil upon the West Asian region can not be fully understood without some knowledge of the international struggle of the oil companies to obtain control of oil deposits, and of the history of the exploration and development of petroleum in West Asia.

The knowledge of the existence of petroleum in West Asia goes back to ancient times. In 1900, General Kitabji Khan, Persia’s Commissioner General asked Sir Henry Drummond, former British Minister in Teheran, at a Paris exposition to find someone in London who would be willing to invest in the exploitation of oil. Sometime later General Kitabji was summoned to London, where he proposed his plan for exploitation of minerals of Persia to William Knox D’Arcy. D’Arcy sent his representatives Alfred M. Marriot and Mr. Cotte with General Kitabji to obtain a concession in his name after passing some difficulties because of Russian influence the concession was signed in D’Arcy’s name on May 28, 1901. Although the company was organised in 1903, to operate the D’Arcy concession in Southern Persia, soon the company found itself
in financial difficulties, then the Burma oil Company and British Admiralty came to help the D'Arcy Company, fearing that the concession might fall into American hands and in May 1905, Concessions Syndicate Limited was formed, D'Arcy as director. It took over as the first exploitation company. In 1908, when oil in commercial quantities was discovered at Masjid-e-Suleiman, and the Anglo Persian oil company was formed in 1909. During the early years of concession two important events took place which effected the development of oil, one, on August 5, 1906, Shah Mozaffar-ed-Din issued a proclamation granting Constitutional government for Persia, and second, in August 1907, an agreement between England and Russia was signed dividing Persia into three zones: the Northern—under Russian influence, and reserved for Russian nationals to seek concessions, the Southern—under British influence, and the Central zone—as a neutral zone for the two great rival powers. This agreement neither admitted Persia to partnership nor even to consultation. The result was the weakening of the control of the Teheran government over the territory under the influence of Russia and Britain.

After this concession all the super powers were in queue to pursue the oil rich countries for concession. The Americans on their part showed no great desire to search for oil until the end of First World War, but when they saw how much American oil had been consumed during the War, from then a continuous struggle had been waged between the U.S. and the Great Britain for the exploitation of the oil resources and in seeking oil concessions. Now the American oil interests became active in the region. The American group represented by Teagle continued to negotiate with the Turkish Petroleum Company. And till the year 1928, the shareholders of the Turkish Petroleum Company were; Anglo Persian Oil Company, Royal Dutch Shell Company, Campagne Francaise des Petroles, the American Group and S.C. Gulbenkian. On July 31, 1928, all the participants of the Turkish Petroleum Company signed a group agreement which limited the activity of each participant in a specified area, which was marked out on a map attached
to the agreement by red line, hence it was called the 'Red Line Agreement' and the name of the Turkish Petroleum Company was changed to 'Iraq Petroleum Company'.

As in accordance with the treaty of December 26, 1915, between Ibn Saud and Britain, the Saudi Arabia was a British protectorate and no oil concession would be given without the approval of the British government. In the Early twenties, a British company, Eastern and General Syndicate Limited through a British major Frank Holms, attempted to obtain oil concessions in the Persian Gulf area. In 1923, he was informed that Ibn Saud had granted the concession of Al Hasa for Eastern and General Syndicate, with the provision that the government had right to cancel the concession. In the first two years the rentals were paid but from the third year the company defaulted on its payments. In 1925, Ibn Saud warned the company for the cancellation of the concession, but the company never acted on this warning. On the other hand the relationship between Ibn Saud and Britain was no longer be that of a protector and protected, and Britain recognised Ibn Saud as an independent ruler.

Now the financial situation of Saudi Arabia was in doldrums. Ibn Saud was finding ways and means to make the country's financial situation a little better, the concession seekers were in queue to get concessions for the region but because of the Red Line Agreement it became a little difficult to adjust. Finally the Standard Oil Company of California obtained a concession for Saudi Arabia on May 29, 1933. In 1936, a subsidiary of Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), the Petroleum Development Company Limited, acquired a sixty year concession in the Western part of Saudi Arabia which abandoned in 1941, in the same year in 1936, it obtained a sixty five year concession from Anglo Iranian Oil Company for the region of Qatar, Oman, Lebanon, Palestine Cyprus and the petty Sheikhdoms.
In 1933, the Standard Oil Company of California secured a sixty-six year concession over Eastern Saudi Arabia, to carry on its operations in Saudi Arabia, this company created the California Arabian Oil Company which became the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) in 1934, with the Texas Oil Company having a fifty percent share.

In Saudi Arabia the first commercial oil field was discovered in Dammam in the year 1938, it brought a flock of concession hunters to Saudi Arabia, among them were the Germans, Italians, Japanese and the Iraq Petroleum Company. But Ibn Saud granted the concessions to American company because of the pressure exerted on him by the governments of other foreign countries and America was the only country which was making his choice of money. Between 1938-1940, the work of the company progressed but with the entry of Italy in the Second World War which had started in 1939, its work seriously curtailed. On the other hand the pilgrimage to Mecca was completely stopped, and these were the two sources of income for the Saudi government. Ibn Saud turned for assistance to the American company and the British government. The American companies in West Asia had never felt secure, they were fully aware of the hostilities of the British, because the Americans had obtained concessions which the British thought should have been theirs and they were intruding in an area which was regarded as an exclusive sphere of British influence. When Ibn Saud demanded for advances, the British might come for the assistance, that situation the Americans wanted to avoid. The only alternative for the American government was to come to company’s assistance. Early in 1943, the company determined to try to persuade the United States government to grant Ibn Saud direct land lease aid. Finally, in February 1943, the United States government lend direct aid to Saudi Arabia, and with this removed the possibility of British penetration. President Roosevelt was fully aware of the oil resources of Saudi Arabia and their importance to the war efforts. As the war was going on, so at this stage he did not want to antagonise the British. He therefore, arranged to
assimilate the British in his assistance to Ibn Saud and decided that Ibn Saud should get his financial assistance but through the British.

The companies were not too happy but something was better than nothing, the promise to King to make available to him $6 million over and above had not to come entirely from their own pockets, at least $3 million was to come from the British and to that extent they were relieved. The ARAMCO also purchased local materials and services which added to the country's economic assistance. But when the American government saw that the British government was advancing to the local Sheikhs and Ibn Saud, and making all the means to get oil concessions, it felt a great danger, the only alternative was for the Americans to come to the company's assistance. Negotiations with the Saudi government started for direct American government's acquisition of the stocks of California Arabian Oil Company, one of the two parent companies. When it became clear that the government could not acquire a direct ownership of the Saudi concession, it proposed that it would build a refinery.

In the meantime the Petroleum Reserve Corporation of America had sent a mission to inspect the reserve potentialities of Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region, the mission was headed by Everette Lee De Golyer, the well known oil geologist. The mission's report was that estimates of reserves proved by developed fields and indicated by fields discovered but not fully explored were about nine billion barrels in Iran, five billion barrels in Saudi Arabia and a billion in Qatar. These estimates encouraged the Petroleum Reserves Corporation to seek new means of securing petroleum reserves in the West Asia. Admiral Andrew Carter, Petroleum Administrator of the Navy, after visiting Saudi Arabia and conferring with representatives of the companies and local governments came up with a proposal that U.S. government build a pipe line from Saudi oil fields to the Mediterranean, for this he began to negotiate with ARAMCO and the Gulf Exploration Company. To the British the reaction to the pipe line project was
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bitter. After a preliminary exchange of assurances with respect to British oil interests in Iran and Iraq and American interest in Saudi Arabia a compromise was worked out that the exploration by both the groups, the negotiations with both the governments were going on but no decision came further, seeing this proposal pending, the Companies decided to build it themselves. In building it they had to face a major problem of acquiring rights of ways from various countries and territories through which the line passed and where the terminus was to be located. In 1945, the companies organised the Trans Arabian pipeline Company (Tapline) with Burton E. Hull as President. On the same basis as their ownership in ARAMCO. In December 1946, the board of directors of the company approved the pipeline project, and it was managed that from where the pipeline would pass.

The pipeline which had a daily capacity of about 310,000 barrels, ran from a distance of 1,040 miles from Saudi Arabian oil fields to the coast of Lebanon. The five birth tanker loading terminal at Sidon, and the pipeline from there to Qaisumah was owned and operated by Tapline. While the pipeline from Qaisumah to Saudi oil fields was owned by ARAMCO.

In order to preserve the dwindling resources of United States oil the availability of West Asian oil must become the cardinal aspect of American oil policy and American foreign policy, but it was sure that America wanted the oil just for her profits to secure a dominant position over Britain and France, while for her own consumption America was having enough oil, for the British and French the situation was quite different. They did not have any alternative resources other than West Asia. Their economies did not permit them to depend upon United States for oil. For solving this problem the British approached Northern Iran which was under Russian dominance, Russia prevented the establishment of other foreign companies in her area of influence, while the Iranians tried very hard to induce American companies to exploit their Northern
fields, however, neither Soviet Russia nor Great Britain was willing to permit the Americans enter into Northern Iran. On the other hand the relations between the Iranian government and the Anglo-Iranian oil Company which were tolerably good began to deteriorate because the Iranians had started to realise that Great Britain was making enormous profits out of the great potentialities of their oil resources which they could use for the welfare of their own country. Since the outbreak of Second World War the relations became more intense on the issue of withdrawal of Allied troops from Iranian territory, on the other after the war the oil prices dropped. The country’s basic needs were not fulfilled, together with difficulties and power politics of super powers set the stage for the nationalisation of Anglo-Iranian oil Company in 1951, in March 1951 the Company’s name changed to National Iranian Oil Company. This gathering storm in Iran prompted ARAMCO to conclude an agreement with Saudi Arabia inaugurating the principle of equal profit sharing. The Americans were primarily concerned with the profit sharing and with keeping the Soviet Union far from entering the area.

The Anglo-French-Israeli attack on Egypt in 1956, greatly effected the pace of the political arena of the Arab region. In many ways the stakes had become more narrowly regional, and the situation was growing more intricate because of the tendency of the Arab - Israeli conflict. It set into motion a tide of Arab nationalist sentiments across the Arab world.

As the IPC was composed of four different groups, the prices charged from the partners were very low, but the profits which went to the partners from IPC were very high, this attitude of the company was not accepted by the Iraqi people, the relations between the government and IPC started to deteriorate, Iraqi people wanted to make their country prosperous, wanted to use their money for themselves. This sentiment led the Iraqi’s towards the revolution of 1958. The Iraq government demanded the share of Iraq in the profits of the company and higher royalties. To them, the foreign companies were exploiters of Iraqi resources,
thieving imperialists who had managed to obtain extraordinary concessions and privileges. Through this emotional sentiment the Iraqi people threatened the company for the nationalisation of IPC. Same was the case with Saudi Arabia, the government was fed up with the oppression of the company, but Saudi Arabia was not ready for nationalisation because of the task of technical know how, the task of the capital necessary to maintain the operation and development of the industry and to the most, the task of international market, to all this, Ahmad Zaki Yamani proposed a 20 percent government participation.

The British protectorates in the Persian Gulf presented another situation, the entire governmental budget of the sheikhdoms of Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar was dependent on oil revenue and that revenue was the subject of British control. Same was the case with Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, these countries benefited very little from the privileges granted the companies for constructing the pipeline terminal and refinery. The countries suffered greatly were Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. The most appropriate answer of the problem of being cheated would naturally be unity, if all the members of the area had united against the foreign companies, they could have obtain their maximum rights and prevent the foreigners from exploiting for their own ends.

Since 1959, three collective instrumentalities were set up in the West Asia for overall purpose of uniting against the oil companies:

a) the Arab Petroleum Congress,
b) the Organisation of Oil Exporting Countries,
c) the Organisation of Arab Oil Exporting Countries.

Beginning with the Iraq Revolution in July 1958, a number of changes took place, Iraq felt that through United Arab efforts she might perhaps get better terms from IPC. In Saudi Arabia Ameer Feisal became the dominant figure, and Abdullah-al-Tariqi, Saudi Arabia’s Director General of Petroleum and Mineral
Affairs, began to agitate for greater Arab participation in the petroleum industry and to call for greater concession from the foreign companies, finally their was a cut in the oil prices which brought a decrease in revenue. These factors brought the Arab League in the oil area. To remedy the situation Iraq suggested that the Arab countries should arrive at a uniform policy for the exploitation of their resources. For this, Arab League Secretariat invited the member states and Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar to attend the session of the technical committee, on April 16, 1958, the chief of the Arab League’s Petroleum Bureau, Muhammad Salman opened the first Arab Petroleum Congress, the Congress proposed the two categories, the first category demanded greater representation for the growth in the actual management of the companies, more Arabs were trained for administrative and executive positions, relinquishment of areas not exploited and for which no rent was paid, no drop in the price of oil without the consultation with the governments concerned. The second category recommended the formation of national oil companies which would embrace all the phases of the industry, “side by side with the private oil companies operating the states,” and a unified policy on the exploitation and preservation of oil resources. In the mean time, the Organisation of Oil Exporting Countries came into being. On February 13,1959, the British Petroleum Company of Iran announced a cut of 18 cents per barrel on its West Asian oil, the other companies operating in the region soon followed it. This price reduction amounted a decrease in total income. The major purpose of OPEC was the restoration of the price cuts.

After the June 1967 Arab-Israel war and the subsequent closure of Suez Canal and a general increase in world demand for oil, the basic relationship pattern between the governments and the companies changed, as a result the role of OPEC changed, meanwhile the devaluation of dollar became an acute issue and subject of negotiations between the governments and the companies. An extraordinary Conference of OPEC members was convened in Beirut in September 1971, it adopted two resolutions, one on government participation and the other
on dollar parity in oil revenues. Hectic negotiations began between the governments and the companies, the matter of dollar devaluation was settled but the question of participation was not easily resolved. Ahmad Zaki Yamani, who negotiated participation for the Persian Gulf countries, warned the companies that the alternative to the participation was the nationalisation, for which the Arabs were ready.

The Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) was the youngest of the limited efforts instrumentalities, it was organised in January 1968, in the face of the consequences for West Asian oil of the Arab-Israel war in 1967. Its conveners, Saudi Arabia and Libya were the greatest victims of the stoppage of oil production during the war and they attempted to remove oil from political interference in future. Its membership at first restricted to Arab countries having oil as the principle and basic source of national income, this condition was waived in 1971. OAPEC'S main concern was to take maximum benefits from its member countries' national resources. In 1970s, the host countries’ policies tended to bifurcate: the radical revolutionary states favoured nationalisation, trying to achieve maximum control of the oil industry through negotiated agreements with the companies.

In February 1971, Algeria seized 51 percent interests of the French concessionaire companies, on 7th, December of that year, Libya nationalised the British Petroleum Company in relation of the occupation of three Persian Gulf islands by Iran, the occupation was bitterly criticised by some Arab countries and greatly intensified the conflict between Iran and Iraq. On June 1, 1972, Iraq nationalised the Iraq Petroleum Company, but offered its French shareholders, a separate agreement in appreciation of French support of the Arabs against Israel. In line with this policy, Saudi Arabia preferred to avoid nationalisation, it launched the idea of participation, and it concluded in 1972, the first participation
agreement, which gave it a 25 percent share in ARAMCO, that was scheduled to rise to 51 percent by 1983.

The outbreak of Arab-Israeli war in 1973, catalysed the situation, the action taken by the Arab oil producing states in response to the Arab Israeli war of October 1973, was very strong. The Arab states decided the general production cutback and selective embargoes on exports to certain states. The Arab boycott implemented the concept of using oil as a weapon, Saudi Arabia warned the United States that an unfriendly American policy might adversely affect the availability of Arab oil, on the other hand OPEC decided to increase the prices of crude oil several fold. In the following weeks and months after the war, the Arab oil ministers held a series of meetings at which the boycott policy was refined, the first meeting held in Kuwait from 17-19 October 1973, in this meeting a binding decision was made to cut monthly production by a minimum of 5 percent from September level of production, Saudi Arabia provided leadership and guidance to the embargo, the United countries established classes of consumer countries:

a) hostile, to which a ban on exports was to be applied,

b) friendly, which were to benefit the September level of exports,

c) neutral, to which the remaining production was to be apportioned

d) most favoured, which were exempted from any cutbacks or embargoes, they were to receive oil according to its needs.

Hostile- U.S., Holland, Portugal, South Africa And Rhodesia to which a full embargo was imposed.

Friendly- those countries which had adjusted their policies in favour of the Arabs such as Japan, Belgium, West Germany and Italy to them supply to September level of exports.

Neutral- (EEC countries).
Most Favoured-Britain, France Spain, Arab countries and those of African countries who had severed their relations with Israel after the October war.

Iraq was the only dissenter among the Arab states: it opposed the cut back decision because it did not differentiate sufficiently between friends and foes, but it soon joined the rest of the Arab states and proclaimed a full ban on exports to the United States and Holland.

The EEC countries were taken in the neutral group because they strongly urged the forces on both sides to return to the original ceasefire line and urged for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and for the recognition of the rights of the Palestinians. This declaration of EEC evoked a sympathetic response in the Arab states. On November 21, 1973, the Secretary of State Henry Kissinger issued a warning that the United States might have to take counter measure if the Arabs continued their embargo. In response to this warning Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani declared that American counter measure against the oil embargo would prompt Arab producers to reduce production by as much as 80 percent and any military intervention would result to the destruction of oil factories.

The October war which ended not in a victory for either party but in an uneasy ceasefire, made necessary a further classification of collective Arab policies with this view an Arab Summit Conference convened in Algiers from 26-28 November 1973, the Arab heads of States declared themselves prepared to pursue a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict on the basis of two principles:

a) Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, headed by Jerusalem, and
b) restoration of the national rights of the Palestinian people.

The Conference decided to ask the West European countries to stop their military and economic assistance to Israel, as for the Asian countries they were to
be persuaded to sever all political, economic and cultural relations with Israel. India's response was very prompt, the spurt in oil prices in 1972-73 and the scare about the impending oil scarcity necessitated India to strengthen its relations with the West Asian countries other than Egypt. India lost influence entirely with Israel and became a passive factor, it abandoned her principles and interests without any incremental leverage. India's support to the Palestinian cause also became stronger and firmer. The secret provisions made to strengthen Arab relations with Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to ensure a supply of arms to the Arabs. These endeavours seem to have born fruits, America started to think for the betterment of relations with the Arabs.

By that time the United States intensified its search for peaceful disengagement in the West Asian conflicts and in response Egypt encouraged these endeavours, and began to press for the relaxation of oil embargo, but Saudi Arabia adamantly rejected the lifting up of the embargo against U.S. until some tangible progress had been made in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The subsequent agreement of the January 17, 1974, on the disengagement of the Arab and Israeli forces reached under American auspices, Egypt again came forward for lifting up of the embargo. The Tripoli Conference of March 1974, brought an agreement to ease or remove the boycott, the Arab states agreed to end the embargo against the United States on the ground that a shift had taken place in Washington's Arab policies, as evidenced by its active role in bringing about an Egyptian Israeli disengagement.

To counter balance the Arab attitude and Arab strategies the United States, Canada, Japan, Turkey and other twelve European states finally created the International Energy Agency (IEA) on November 15, 1974, in Paris, the main features of the IEA were:
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a) establishment of an energy sharing agreement among the major consumer countries in case of a new embargo,
b) setting up of a cooperative conservation and energy development programme,
c) establishment of a $25 million fund to recycle petro money into deficit countries,
d) the convening of a conference among the producer and consumer countries.\(^{29}\)

The 1973 oil embargo created a dynamic change in the international political system, a tremendous increase in world oil consumption during 1967 and 1973 wars dried up the access productive capacity outside West Asia. OPEC countries emerged as the key suppliers and it enabled OPEC to rise oil price from $3 per barrel to $36 per barrel. This increase prompted the consumer countries for investment in non OPEC countries for exploration and development, for all this the consumer countries established the IEA. The price hike imposed severe pressures on India’s foreign exchange resources coupled with the pressing need for ensuring oil supplies in a situation of panicky world wide scramble for oil. There was also a massive hike in India’s oil bill. Two thirds of India’s oil imports came from Iran, the next largest supplier was Saudi Arabia. India was earlier spending only 130 crores on petroleum and lubricants but with the two subsequent oil crises, the expenditure shot up to astronomical figures for India.

India’s major concerns were finding credits on favourable terms, investment in India by oil producers and obtaining oil at concessional prices, if possible, in order to reduce the sky-rocketing balance of payments deficit. The urgent task of broadening the source of supply of oil and strengthening the ties with existing supplier countries was patent. In addition India was interested in finding fresh outlets in the oil rich countries to market her non traditional (manufacturing and semi-manufacturing) exports as well as primary commodities. With a surplus skilled and semi-skilled manpower, India was also interested in exporting this asset to oil rich countries in order to secure foreign exchange through remittances.
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The development of relations with Iran had already been noted, so too with Iraq which had undertaken in October 1972, to supply two million tons of crude over the next many years. Agreements were also signed with the oil surplus countries like UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, etc. for taking their market so that India could ensure reliable source for her oil needs as well as diversify the source of supply in order not to become dependent on one source alone.

Next to Iran, India imported oil from Saudi Arabia (until replaced by Iraq), but relations with Saudi Arabia developed slowly. There was a variety of reasons for this halting and trading developments of relations. The Saudis had their sights fixed on Washington and their pro-Western orientation produced its own reactive inhabitations in India. Moreover, India’s close relations with Moscow could hardly please Riyadh. Its conservative appeal to religion and self acquired mission to help Islamic movements in many other countries, which made it tilt towards Pakistan, was another impediment. Yet another factor was that Saudi Arabia was generally very cautious and careful both in reactions to international developments and relations with other countries. All the same relations with Saudi Arabia as with many other countries of the region continued to develop.

A cultural agreement was signed in November 1971, and in September 1972, it was disclosed that Kuwait had agreed to reduce by $1.75 per ton the price of furnace oil to supply one million tons of petroleum products as against the originally committed figure of 600,000. In February 1973, the two countries agreed to the establishment of an inter governmental joint committee for economic and technical corporation which would need at last once a year in the two countries respectively.

So in the late 1960s and in the 1970s, India successfully improved bilateral relations by developing mutually beneficial economic and cultural exchanges with Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and other gulf countries. New Delhi’s Middle Eastern relations were further strengthened by its anti-Israeli stance in the Arab-Israeli
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wars of 1967 and 1973, and by Indian support for the fourfold price rise in 1973 by OPEC.

But in any way super powers were not ready to leave West Asia. They always wanted to protect their strategic and economic interest in the region. America wanted to protect its interests from Soviets whose military presence in the region was always a matter of worry for Americans. After 1973 war Soviets started to cultivate a good relationship with Iraq, Syria, South Yemen and Libya by supplying them with modern military hardware so as to enable them to fight their war with Israel. Soviet Union always envisaged the control of Iranian oil, if opportunity arises. To counter balance the Soviet strategies the United States started to think for the establishment of its military bases in the region. United States Department of State and Defense explored the possibility of reaching agreements with one or more of the states in the Gulf and Mediterranean. The areas considered were, Mombasa, Kenya, Barbera, Somalia and Arabian sea islands of Masira belonging to Oman. These locations had the necessary infrastructure and could provide adequate support to naval and air forces of Rapid Deployment Force which was later in 1983 was discharged to CENTCOM as the United States Central Command.

When in the year 1979-80, the OPEC increased the oil prices five times greater than the increase in 1972-73. The consumer countries started to boost up domestic oil production because the oil crisis had severely affected the economic development of the non-oil-developing world.

On the other there were border disagreements between Iran and Iraq, though they have rivalry since ancient times, the rivalry often translated into an armed conflict. Since 1960s each had used the others arms building up, to justify its own acquisitions, Iran aligning with the United States received arms superior to those provided to Iraq by Soviet Union. In 1975, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and Shah of Iran signed the Algiers Agreement, establishing the navigable
channel on the Shatt-al-Arab river as the official border between the two countries. Iraq had long considered the entire river under its jurisdiction. President Hussein agreed to settle the Shatt border dispute in return for the Shah’s pledge to stop aiding Iraqi Kurds in their struggle against the Iraqi government but Shah’s regime was overthrown and Khomeini regime captured power in Iran. This regime immediately began a campaign against Iraq to destabilise Iraq through the support of Iraqi dissent groups. Iran continued to threat Shatt as sovereign Iranian territory. The building up of political tension and border skirmishes and Khomeini’s call for Hussein’s overthrow, all indicated increase in tension. In 1979, the Iraq government asked Iran to abrogate the Algiers Agreement and return to the previous border areas including Shatt river. Faced with growing pressure from Iraq, Iran stated to restore ties with the U.S. The meeting between Iranian officials and U.S. diplomats was settled. This meeting aroused suspicion among the radicals in Iran, they thought that the Americans were conspiring for another coup as they made in 1953, in which Premier Mossadegh’s regime was ended and General Zahedi took over the government after a heavy clash between the supporters of Mossadegh and Shah. the radicals occupied the U.S. embassy in Teheran taking American officials hostages. The hostage crisis isolated Iran from America. This provocative move not only created chaos but also isolated the nation and weakened its military capabilities.

As Iraq was watching it closely it chose to strike Iran in 1980, but miscalculated Iran’s resourcefulness and President Saddam Hussein failed to achieve a quick victory, the war lasted for seven long years and ended in 1987. The war was like a puzzle for the super powers, they were neutral at the start, the Americans wanted to take advantage of the war drama to release its hostages and desire to maintain security of the Western and Japanese oil supply and protected the supply route from Soviets. The U.S. succeeded in acquiring facilities for its bases in Oman, Somalia, Kenya and possibility of Egypt and Saudi Arabia
for the deployment of CENTCOM. The war had offered the United States and its allies in IEA to cooperate in building more strategic reserves. Severely weakened due to the terrible losses in war with Iran, Saddam Hussein expected the U.S. and GCC states to bail him out of his predicament. Instead the reverse happened. Not only the U.S. abandoned Saddam Hussein but GCC countries over produced oil which hurt Iraq. The result was Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as a bargaining chip to achieve Saddam’s demands: the waving of loans and a curb on the GCC oil production. Although the U.S. support to Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and U.S. naval bombardment of Lebanon in 1982-83, U.S. attack on Libya in 1986 and also its efforts to isolate PLO had undermined U.S. position in the Muslim world but with Egypt, Turkey, Morocco, Pakistan, GCC states, Syria and others on its side the U.S. mobilised a coalition to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation in 1990-91. For some times U.S. interests were of controlling Iraq’s oil deposits because along with the Libyan, Iranian oil the Iraqi oil was out side the influence of U.S. but U.S. presented its action as multilateral effort to liberate Kuwait, an occupied country.

The war between Iran and Iraq caused deep disappointment and dismay among most non-aligned countries and considerable anxiety in India. Both the countries suffered considerable destruction and severe economic strain. Subsequently, it enabled and encouraged Israel to march into Lebanon with impunity and deal a crippling blow to the PLO. India was inevitably greatly concerned at this sudden crisis. As a leading country among the non-aligned countries her anxiety was natural. This war forced India to shift its oil purchases from Iran and Iraq to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf states. India took a position of neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war, it maintained warm ties with Baghdad and built workable political relations with Tehran.

The rise of oil to the central position in the world’s energy picture was a relatively recent phenomenon. At the beginning of the twentieth century, coal
occupied the dominant position; at the onset of World War I, as much as 75 percent of the world's energy consumption came from coal. Coal's preferred position deteriorated rapidly during the next forty years, however, as more and more oil was found in exploitable locations. Given oil's relative cleanliness, its ease of production, and relatively low cost during this period, and given the invention of the internal combustion engine, oil gradually surpassed coal as the world's dominant energy resource. By 1950, oil had supplanted coal as the world's most important energy source, and fifteen years after that, by 1980, oil met nearly one half of the world's energy needs. Impending oil scarcity was not the only reason that oil became a source of concern. Much of the Western world's prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s was built on the availability of inexpensive oil. Indeed, from the late 1940s through the early 1970s, oil declined in price relative to most other commodities. Depressed oil prices for this 25 years period may be attributed both to favourable concessions gained by the major oil companies from their sources of production and to their success in keeping independent producers out of the market. When OPEC, whose member states had recently gained control of production and pricing decisions over the oil they produced, quadrupled the price of oil during the winter of 1973-74, the entire non-Communist world economy felt the shock. Cheap oil was the thing of the past.

Unfortunately, however, the habits, technologies, and investment patterns that had been established during the post war era of cheap oil could not be changed overnight. In the United States, for example, the automobile played a dominant role in social, cultural, and economic life; to some the entire American style of life was based on the habit of the car. In industry cheap oil had led to lack of concern about efficient energy use. Impending scarcity, increased prices and politically induced disruption of oil supply also played havoc with the economies of the third world countries.
Oil problems exist in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well. A 1977, CIA report concluded that Soviet oil production would begin to slide during the early 1980s, but Kremlin vehemently denied the reports accuracy, eventually forcing the U.S.S.R. and Eastern Europe to begin to import oil by the mid 1980s. During the turmoil in Iran following the collapse of Shah's government and Khomeini's coming to power, the cut off of Iranian oil exports to the U.S.S.R. found the Soviet Union in such tight oil supply that Soviet factories in Central Asia grounded to a halt because of the U.S.S.R.'s inability to make up the short fall. Price increase had also frustrated consumers of Soviet oil and oil products.

In the emerging world order with the end of Cold War and demise of U.S.S.R. the United States became the only super power to rule the world on its own terms, it became clear from the Kuwait crisis of 1990-91. During this war Indian policy makers were torn between adopting a traditional non-aligned policy sympathetic to Iraq or favouring the coalition of moderate Arab and Western countries that could benefit Indian security and economic interests. India initially adopted an ambivalent approach, condemning both the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the intrusion of external forces into the region.

Conflict over oil is far from certain, however for as we have seen, the world's energy future is murky at best. How well will government policies, technical innovations, and changed living habits succeed in making alternate energy sources more attractive? Can efficiency and conservation extend the time that currently utilised energy sources, particularly oil, can be exploited? How much more oil, gas, and coal remain to be discovered? These questions are unanswerable, but their answers hold the key to the world's energy future.

West Asia is one of the most strategically important regions in the world. Both geographical proximity to oil resources and important communication lines have attracted the powers to West Asia. The British connection to India and West
Asia the only route to it made British to have a stronghold on West Asia. The advent of World War I brought a reorientation of British policy committed to fight and destroy the Ottoman empire. The years from 1915-1922 were of dramatic consequence over the West Asian region, the Hussein-Mac Mohan correspondence, the Sykes-Picot treaty, the Balfour Declaration and the British and French mandates over the Ottoman territories finally constituted a great deal of trouble to that area. Then the discovery of oil and a grand rush of the powers for acquiring oil concessions of that region made the situation more complex. Britain as mandatory over Palestine was free to do anything with that piece of land it issued the Balfour Declaration to gain support of world Jewry and placed the Jews in Palestine, this act of theirs aroused the world’s most tragic problem.

The policy of India towards the West Asian crises were a continuation of its age old relations with the region. On the question of Palestine, India supported the cause of Arabs since the issue of the Balfour Declaration of 1917. When the Suez crisis erupted in the wake of Nasser’s nationalisation of the Suez Canal on July 26, 1956, and the subsequent invasion of Egypt by Britain, France and Israel, India’s response was very critical, it opposed the move of three big powers against a small country like Egypt. The Indian government cautiously extended its support to Egypt on the grounds that the Canal was an Egyptian property and the act was an exercise of Egyptian sovereignty. In the U.N. India repeatedly advocated the need for a peaceful solution of the problem. It gave its full support to the UNEF. Nehru stressing the need for a peaceful solution stated in the Parliament that because of Egypt’s decision and the world wide repercussions to it, the issue if not resolved peacefully could lead to a great conflict, whose effects would not be easy to assess. When the issue was resolved India also assisted Egypt on the question of ownership and the management of the Canal.

Oil was a great factor in the West Asian politics, even the big powers who produce oil have been interested in the control of oil resources of the West
Asian region to maintain their supremacy and preserve their own limited resources for future. The region was influenced more by Europe than the East despite the fact that Asian countries identify with Arabs more than the Europeans. The Palestinian question is the fundamental cause of the oil being used as a political instrument.
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