CHAPTER-II

THE US FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT
CHAPTER TWO - II
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This chapter examines the various underlying interests that led the US to get involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It explores factors that constituted the US predominance as a third party in the Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. For many years, the role of the United States as the primary military, economic, and diplomatic supporter of Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflict has been the most contentious issue in the Islamic World. The US is seen as having its own interests in playing active mediatory role owing to facet deliberate concerns which included: Its concerns about the security of oil supplies from the region; Commitment to protect Israel’s security and prosperity owe to shared values, cultural affinities and a common ethical and religious heritage; The US-Israeli ‘special relationship’ as a strategic ally. The factors behind this relationship were significant in terms of diplomacy, aid, arms sales as well as strategic consideration.

Over the decades, many of Israel’s most intractable foes in the Islamic world have belatedly came to the realisation that Israel exists as a permanent Jewish state in West Asia and are willing to accept it as reality. There are extremist Islamic groups like the Al-Qaeda terrorist network, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, that in addition to opposing Israel’s occupation of the West Bank are out-rightly opposed to the country as a whole. The Israeli occupation and subsequent US support has consequently fuelled much of the anger and frustration that has driven Islamic groups to support terrorism and extremist ideologies.¹

2.1. US Policy Pillars
America’s original policy was defined in 1947 as a result of the need to consider all the basic issues involved in establishing a new country in a foreign land with an indigenous majority population. America’s position on partition represented the earliest and most complex formulation of official US policy on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. In summary US policy pillars have evolved in the following ways since 1947:-

1) Arms in effect policy between 1947 and 1961 held for total embargo on selling weapons sales to the Arabs.

2) Provision of weapons to Israel by the United States with nearly its most advanced weapons and publicly proclaiming a policy to assure Israel of a "qualitative edge" over all its Arab foes.

3) Despite America's worldwide opposition to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, Washington tacitly showed tolerance for Israel's development of a nuclear arsenal reported to be among the largest in the world.

4) Original position stated the Holy City belonged to neither Arab nor Jew but was an international city that should come under governance of a special international regime.

5) This changed in 1967 to a formula where the holy places were to be under international protection and the fate of the city was left up to negotiations between Israelis and Arabs.

6) With the coming of the Clinton administration in 1993, Washington began funding construction of Jewish housing in a vastly expanded area called Greater Jerusalem.

Critics on both sides of the conflict, whether pro-Israel or pro-Palestinian agree that the greatly altered policy pillars came about largely as a result of successful efforts by the Israeli lobby. The success of the pro-Israeli lobby has become a source of pride for Israel and its supporters, and of despair for the Palestinians. The interaction between the pro-Israel lobby and the State Department as well as, the policy struggles among the White House, Congress, and the diplomats and its dynamics have formulated the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into that of the most intriguing policy conundrums in American diplomatic history.  

1.1. The United States Palestinian Policy

The United States pursued a very complex foreign policy toward Palestine in the period of the British Mandate when Palestine was dismembered in 1948. In theory, the US accepted the right of the Palestinians to return to their country (UN Resolution 194 in December 1948) but it remained indifferent to its implementation. In fact, it actively assisted Israel in denying this right to the Palestinians. For a variety of

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complex reasons, the United States refused to accept in principle or as a matter of policy the right of the Palestinian people's self-determination until the early 1990's. The United States Palestinian policy could be summarised:

1) The US policy originally contained no recognition of the Palestinians as a separate people. They were clubbed together as Arabs whose fate best would be resolved by resettlement in Arabs states.

2) Between 1948 and 1974, Washington considered Palestinians as refugees or terrorists or occupied civilians.

3) It was since the 1990s that Washington signalled its recognition of the Palestinians as a distinct nation.

4) However, the US has never gone so far as to espouse their cause in the United Nations, to grant them the right of self-determination or to endorse their claim to a Palestinian state.

Refugee policy:

1) Refugee policy began as an endorsement of the right of displaced Palestinians to return to their homes or to receive compensation and resettlement.

2) Although later administration continued to support that formulation in resolutions passed almost annually by the UN General Assembly, none of them made a serious effort to carry it out to fruition.

Settlement policy:


2) The policy has since gone from considering settlements "illegal" under Jimmy Carter, "obstacles to peace" under Ronald Reagan to "complicating factors" under Bill Clinton.

3) Since the waning days of the senior Bush administration, Washington agreed to help finance some settlement construction with US funds.

Both Israel and the United States refused to include the PLO in the peace process. And the PLO, like most Arab governments, initially ruled out any negotiations with Israel. However, by the mid-1970s the Palestinians began expressing their desire to be included in the peace process. The US insisted that the Kingdom of Jordan- a US ally that had controlled the West Bank between 1948 and 1967 and was host to a sizable population of Palestinian refugees would serve as the Palestinian representative. But
given the traditional hostility between Jordan and PLO that led to civil war in Jordan during the early 1970’s in which thousands of Palestinians refugees were killed and few of them felt that the Hashemite Monarchy (Jordanian government) could fairly represent their interests.

The US position was that the PLO could participate in the peace process only on three conditions given that:

1) They recognised Israel’s right to exist;
2) They recognised UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis of the peace talks;
3) They renounced terrorism.

While most observers believed these conditions were reasonable, what seemed to be unreasonable was the US refused to insist that Israel reciprocate: Israel at this time was refusing to recognise Palestinian’s right to exist and rejected 242 and 338. Furthermore, only the PLO was asked to renounce terrorism, even though Israel’s armed forces were responsible for far more civilian deaths than the various Palestinian militias.3

The US endorsed the Balfour Declaration and had accepted the imposition of the British Mandate on Palestine. The provisions of the mandate recognised the legitimacy of the claim for the establishment in Palestine of “a national Home for the Jewish people” as the corporate existence of the Jewish community in Palestine while denying the Palestinians their political rights, especially their rights to self-government.

The US was concerned more for the achievement of a privileged status for its citizens in a colonised Palestine. In other words, the US sought to benefit from British imperialist control of Palestine. In the process, it also provided both moral and informational support for Zionism and its claims. It remained indifferent to the fate of Palestine Arab community.4 The United States foreign policy towards Palestine until recently has been that the Palestinians were one of the problems in ending the Arab-Israeli disputes rather than the core of the issue that deserved participation in the peace process.

3 See Zunes (2003), n.1, pp. 103-107.
The question of Palestine has become subordinate to the Arab-Israeli conflict although the question of Palestine has always been at the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict. From 1948 until the 1967 War, the US considered the Palestinian people in the context of the refugee problem and not as an independent national movement. Following the creation of State of Israel in 1948, Palestine disappeared from policy consideration of the United States and did not re-emerge until the late 1960s. The United States’ frame of reference on the Palestinian issue was centred on the Israeli perspective which ignored the Palestinian viewpoint ever since the Eisenhower administration through the Reagan years with the exceptions during Carter administration.

President Carter shifted the terrorist-refugee perception on 16 March 1977, when he said the Palestinians had legitimate rights to self determination and should participate in any deliberations about their future. The Camp David agreements of September 1978 mentioned the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. The US barred the PLO from participating in the US sponsored peace process for nearly twenty years in part because the PLO refused to accept UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 as the basis of negotiation. The resolutions called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in return for security guarantees. Congress codified the pledge into law (Section 535, P.L. 98-473, October 12, 1984), and added that the PLO also must renounce terrorism.

Meanwhile, the PLO as the Palestinian de facto government in exile under the leadership of Yasser Arafat has evolved from openly calling for Israel’s destruction to supporting the international consensus for a two state solution. It hinted willingness to accept a small Palestinian state living in peace alongside Israel and made it official.

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5 Ibid., pp.191-201.
8 Resolution 242 required the acknowledgment of the sovereignty and political independence of every state in West Asia including Israel and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised borders. Resolution 338 stipulated that resolution of the conflict should be based on land for peace – that is Israel’s withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for security guarantees. Also like Resolution 242, Resolution 388 referred to the Palestinians merely in terms of the need to “resolve the refugee problem” and for this reason, the PLO initially declined to accept the resolution.
in 1988, and formally repealed sections in its charter calling for Israel’s dissolution in 1996, which was confirmed in a PNC meeting on 18 December 1998 in the presence of visiting US President Bill Clinton.

On 13 December 1988, the UN General Assembly convened a special session in Geneva specifically to hear an address by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat after the United States denied him permission to come to New York. In his speech Arafat unequivocally reaffirmed the PLO’s commitment to diplomacy and two-state solution, recognised Israel, accepted UN Resolutions 242 and 338, and renounced terrorism. Based on these statements, United States diplomats began exploratory talks with PLO officials in December 1988. Secretary of State George Shultz (under President Reagan) stated on 14 December 1988, that the PLO had met the conditions stipulated by the US and that it would open a dialogue with the PLO in Tunis, Tunisia, on 16 December 1988. Ever since American policy makers had accepted the PLO as the widely supported spokesperson for the Palestinians. The Congress gave the President the authority to waive previously passed legislation prohibiting US contributions to the United Nations for funding any PLO activities, threatening to withdraw US membership from international organisations that recognised the PLO, prohibiting US government employees from negotiating with the PLO, and labelling the PLO a terrorist organisation.

The United States maintained the dialogue with the PLO in Tunis until 20 June 1990. President Bush announced on 6 March 1991 (in the wake of the Gulf war), that he would pursue Arab-Israeli peace negotiations and dispatched Secretary of State James Baker to West Asia where he met with Palestinian leaders from the Occupied Territories. Baker’s several trips to the region and his contacts with the Palestinians, Jordanians, Israelis, Syrians, Egyptians, and others led to peace talks in Madrid on the 30th of October 1991.

However, Israel objected to the decision that the PLO be a party to the negotiations, that only Palestinians from the territories approved by Israel (and no East Jerusalem residents), should form part of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation

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and that there should be no pre-condition to the talks. Whereas most Arab nations were invited to participate; the US explicitly excluded the PLO from taking part. It allowed Palestinian participation only if they came as part of Jordanian delegation and their delegates were neither from the Palestinian Diaspora nor Israeli-occupied East Jerusalem and they had no affiliation with PLO.

Thus at Madrid and the subsequent meetings, the United States and Israel treated the Palestinians as part of the Jordanian delegation, and not as a separate entity. Despite these restrictions, the Palestinian delegates consisting primarily of respected West Bank intellectuals were in practice able to operate separately from the Jordanian delegation and work in close coordination with the PLO.

Following intense behind-the-scenes contacts between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators an agreement was achieved between Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. On 9 September 1993, Chairman Arafat sent a noteworthy letter to Prime Minister Rabin, in which he stated unequivocally that, the PLO:

1) Recognises the right of Israel to exist in peace and security;
2) Accepts UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338;
3) Commits itself to a peaceful resolution of the conflict;
4) Renounces the use of terrorism and other acts of violence;
5) Assumes responsibility over all PLO elements to ensure their compliance, prevent violations, and discipline violators;
6) Affirms that those articles of the PLO Covenant which deny Israel's right to exist are now inoperative and no longer valid;
7) Undertakes to submit to the Palestinian National Council for formal approval the necessary changes to the Covenant.

In reply, Israel recognised the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians in the peace negotiations. On 10 September 1993, following the Israeli-PLO mutual recognition, President Clinton announced that the United States would resume dialogue with the PLO. On 13 September the two signed the ‘Declaration of Principles’ that called for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, the election of a Palestinian Council, and negotiations for future withdrawals and a permanent settlement in 5 years. PLO leader Arafat, representing the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, shared the spotlight with Israeli Prime Minister Rabin and

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President Clinton at the signing of the Declaration of Principles on the White House lawn on 13 September 1993.\textsuperscript{17}

Following a pledge made at the Wye River conference October 1998, President Clinton visited Gaza to attend the 14 December 1998 meeting of the PLO National Council, at which the Council voted by a show of hands to reaffirm the PLO covenant that had been amended to remove anti-Israeli references.

The US opposition to Palestinian statehood in the past had finally shifted as President Clinton approached the end of his presidency and as President declared in 2001 that the United States would support a Palestinian state in parts of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.\textsuperscript{18} Thus the attitudes of the US official toward the Palestinians evolved over time from being refugees to a distinct nation deserving homeland.

\textbf{1.2. US-Israeli Special Relationship}

The US-Israeli relations have evolved into a unique, strategic alliance since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948. A special relationship has developed between the US-one of the largest and most powerful nations, and Israel-one of the smallest countries in West Asia. Despite occasional diplomatic discord America continued to support Israel's existence and safety. In general, Israel is perceived and discussed in favourable terms, and support for Israel enjoys wide bipartisan appeal consensus and acknowledgement by the Congress.\textsuperscript{19} Since the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, US diplomacy has become the lynchpin behind nearly all efforts to reach Arab-Israeli peace settlement.

There are several important reasons why US citizens have favoured Israel and opposed Soviet expansion during the World War II. Of these, most notable was that the United States has tremendous sympathy for the experience of European Jews during the war.\textsuperscript{20} Other reasons include:

\textbf{1) Both countries are democracies-} One of the factors that contributed to widespread American sympathy and goodwill towards the State of Israel are the

\textsuperscript{18} Zunes (2003), n. 1, p. 107.
common beliefs shared by people of both countries, which included Israel’s commitment to maintain a democratic form of government which is seen as unique in the region, which has garnered American support from the outset.21

2) **Israel and the United States espouse shared Judeo-Christian principles**- A common democratic heritage and pioneering background which facilitated the development of a natural kinship with the land of the Bible and ‘the people of the book’ were the Americans religious and historical ties to the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. The link between the ancient Hebrews and the modern Israelis was played up repeatedly. For many, in America, Israel’s very existence is a proof for the realisation of Biblical prophecies. The vision of Israel as the land where the Biblical happenings took place stimulates the American imagination.

President Johnson reminisced at a *B’nai B’rith*22 meeting in 1968 that, “The Bible stories are woven into my childhood memories as the gallant struggle of modern Jews to be free of persecution”.23 Once the link between the Bible, the Holy Land, and Israel was established, “a profound bond” was erected between “The Jews of Israel and the Christians of America.”24

4) **American Jews**- Jewish Americans are affectionately attached towards the land and its history. They have a very effective pro-Israel political support organisation such as American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee. American Jews, while strongly retaining their cultural identity, are fully integrated into leading roles in the political, economic, social, literary, cultural and professional elite of US. The Jewish people today are predominantly an Americans. There are more American Jews than there are Jews belonging to any other nationality.25

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21 Ibid., p. 223.
22 *B’nai B’rith* International the global voice of the Jewish community, is an international Jewish organisation committed to the security and continuity of the Jewish people and the State of Israel, defending human rights, combating anti-Semitism, bigotry and ignorance, and providing service to the community on the broadest principles of humanity. Its mission is to unite persons of the Jewish faith and to enhance Jewish identity through strengthening Jewish family life and the education and training of youth, broad-based services for the benefit of senior citizens, and advocacy and action on behalf of Jews throughout the world. For further detail see *B’nai B’rith International* (2006), [Online: web] Accessed 11 November 2006, URL: http://www.bnaibrith.org/index.cfm.
The United States government has always emphasised its role in the establishment of Israel, and has sometimes expressed its moral commitment to the Jewish survivors of the Nazi slaughter of six million Jews. It is the combination of American ideals and the aspirations of American Jews that has been largely responsible for the willingness of the US government to respond to and cooperate with American Jews.

2.2. Determinants of US Interest

US-Israeli strategic interest during the Cold War- between World War II and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, US West Asia policy has been based on some broad goals. The most noteworthy of which were:

1) Stop Soviet expansion into the region;
2) Keep open West Asian lines of communication and trade;
3) Maintain Western access to West Asian oil;
4) Foster democracy and free market economies;
5) Protect Israel’s security.

The following section will examine various underlying interests that led the US to get involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In the 1950s some argued it was the policy of containment adopted shortly before Israel establishment that led to America’s friendly and supportive attitude. The fact that Israel as a stable democracy, fit nicely into the America’s plan to prevent Soviet expansion in the West Asian region.

Despite difference in tactics and occasional discord, support for Israel continued to be a central element of American West Asia policy and a matter of concern for all Americans. The fact that the US commitment to Israel continued even when strategic logic dictated against it owe to shared values, cultural affinities and a common ethical and religious heritage. For a variety of reasons, successive

American governments have adhered to and maintained a commitment to preserve not just the security but also the prosperity of Israel. The nature of the ‘special relationship’ means that the US perceived Israel as a strategic ally and regional policeman in West Asia. The factors behind this relationship were significant in terms of diplomacy, aid, arms sales as well as strategic consideration.\(^{30}\) The major actors in the West Asia policy making process are:

1) The President and his National Security Adviser and Minority Affairs Adviser;
2) The Congress; the State Department;
3) the Bureau of New East and South Asian Affairs;
4) Bureau of International Organisations and the Policy Planning Staffs;
5) The Department of Defence together with the Joint Chiefs of Staffs and the International Security Agency;
6) The Intelligence Community with the Central Intelligence Agency playing key roles;
7) The Peace Interest Groups and in the last the Public Opinion.\(^{31}\)

Interest groups however do not have total influence over US foreign policy related to West Asia; they typically serve to increase the importance of the issue and shaped public opinions as well as opinions in the legislative and executive branches of the government.

2.2.1. **The Post Cold War US Strategic Cooperation**

The end of the Cold War has brought about a new era in the west Asia politics. The destruction of the Berlin Wall (the symbol of Cold War) in late 1989 symbolically marked the beginning of the end of Cold War and the eclipse of the Soviet empire marked a decisive shift in the global balance of power particularly to end the era of bipolarity. The US emerged as the only Super-power that could initiate and implement policies. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, West Asian countries were left with no choice but to look up to Washington.


Even the Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasser Arafat had to listen to the American council advice in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On the other hand the end of the Cold War increased US-Israel strategic cooperation.

American and Israeli security officials had an in-dept and wide ranging series of discussions in Tel Aviv in mid-November 2001, clarifying issues related to strategic cooperation between the two allies. The semi-annual Joint Political Military Group (JPMG) meeting was held alongside the annual session of the Joint Security Assistance Planning Group (JSAP). The talk featured exchanges on the missile defence capabilities of both states, including options for closer cooperation between each nation's ongoing programmes. As the JPMG was the largest US-Israel bilateral security gathering since 9/11, considerable attention was also devoted to intelligence sharing mechanisms and planning for joint counter terrorist activities.32

The most feared threat was the emerging force of terrorism which challenged both US and Israel. This made US relations with Israel strategically relevant as an ally, even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since 9/11 the Israeli law-enforcement authorities worked closely with their American counterparts to track and tackle terrorism in West Asia. Having lost so many lives over the years of terrorist attacks perpetrated by groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah, Israel invested huge resources to fight terrorism and Islamic radicalism, making the country a major partner with the United States. In an answer to the question, whether Israel was hurting the peace process with repeated incursions President Bush replied:

> There are people in the Middle East who want to use terror as a way to derailed—derail any peace process. And we've got to work together to create the conditions that prevent a few from stopping what most people in the region want, which is peace. Israel has a right to defend herself. And at the same time, as Israel does so, the Prime Minister is willing to discuss the conditions necessary to achieve what we want, which is a secure region and a hopeful region.33

Israel continued to play a significant role in containing radicals, be it Islamic or secular. The conservative Arab regimes also faced threats from Islamic radicalism. It is here that the US continued to find strategic relevance after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War.

Today, US-Israeli strategic ties are stronger than ever. To cite a few examples:


1) In early 1997, Israel linked up to the US missile warning satellite system, which would provide Israel with real-time warning if a missile is launched against it.

2) Joint military exercises are regularly held. In November 1996, US Marines held training exercises in the Negev region.

3) A joint anti-terrorism working group was created.

4) A telephone hotline was established between the Pentagon and the Israeli Defense Ministry.


The strategic cooperation agreements established Israel as a de facto ally of the United States, institutionalised military-to-military contacts, and sent a message to the Arabs that America was not afraid to risk upsetting them and shifted at least part of the focus of relations with Israel from Congress to the Executive Branch.34

2.2.2. The Oil Dimension

The protection of West Asian oil from internal or external control has been primary US foreign policy determinant towards the region. The US interests revolved around the economic resources of the region, in view of the fact that over 60 percent of the global oil reserves are located in the Gulf regions. The US has been increasingly becoming more reliant on imports of oil, although its percentage of dependence on oil from West Asia remains much lower than that of Japan or Europe. Regardless of the source of US imports, oil is a global commodity, and a steady oil market cannot be geographically contained.

It was for this reason that the Carter Doctrine enunciated that no hostile power could be permitted to dominate the Gulf or those resources. American interest in this region has primarily been to ensure continued freedom of access to the region’s oil

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supplies. The US government has utilised every means at its disposal to make certain that the property and the right of access of the Americans are fully protected. The entry of American dominated multinational oil capital into West Asia was a unique application of the open door policy. The main provisions of this development was first, the nationals of all nations be subject, in all mandated territories, to equal treatment in law, second that no economic concessions in any mandated region be so large as to be exclusive, and third that no monopolistic concessions relating to any commodity be granted.

2.2.3. Support to Zionist Ideology

One of the major areas of US involvement in West Asia was the evolving support of the Zionist movement, which in 1948 led to the creation of the State of Israel in Palestine. President Woodrow Wilson approved the text of the Balfour Declaration issued by the British Government on the 2 November, 1917. Moreover, when the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) recommended the partition of Palestine to the UN General Assembly, approval eventually came under strong US pressure as UN Resolution 181 on 29 November 1947, contrary to the wishes of the indigenous population. It stipulated the formation of a Jewish state and an Arab state with Jerusalem under international control. American inputs into the evolution of Zionist days had been sporadic; however at the end of World War II, it acquired its active role in this conflict.

2.2.4. The Pro-Israel Lobby

According to John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, the “special relationship” with Israel is due largely to the activities of the Israel lobby- a loose coalition of individuals and organisations who openly work to push US foreign policy in a pro-Israel direction,. The lobby is not synonymous with Jewish Americans because many of them do not support its positions and some groups that work on Israel’s behalf (Christian evangelicals for example) are not Jewish.

These organisations believed that they are simply engaged in interest group politics, a legitimate activity in the American political system and that their efforts

advance both American and Israeli interests. They fostered support within the US Congress and the executive branch, and it shaped public discourse so that Israel's actions were perceived sympathetically by the American public. Interest groups in the lobby direct campaign contributions encourage politicians to adopt pro-Israel positions. They wrote articles, letters, and manoeuvre campaign defending Israel's actions, and they went to great lengths to discredit or marginalise anyone who criticised US support for Israel.  

2.2.4.1. The Jewish Lobby

There is probably no other foreign policy issue that rooted in domestic politics in the United States as the country's approach towards Israel. As Ken Organski has argued, there are a number of geopolitical, cultural, historical, and other reasons why the United States would consistently back Israel, but there are also important elements of leadership organisation among Israel supporters.  

Ever since the establishment of the State of Israel, it desired three things from American Jews: financial support, political backing, and their presence in Israel. But most of the American Jews were not willing to migrate to Israel; their help was thus limited to money and politics. The newly established State of Israel desperately needed US economic aid. During Israel's first three years, the population swelled to more than a million. Israel acquired economic and strong political support from the US in view of intense Arab hostility to the creation of a new state for the Jews. American Jewish leaders understood that the Arabs would make peace if they knew the US supported a strong Israel.  

The Jewish lobby as an interest group plays a prominent role impacting in the makings of the US foreign policy. The Jews are in fact influential in American politics. Former Illinois Congressman Paul Findley believed that the American-Israeli Public Congress' West Asia policy has become a "captive of its client state" and that the Israel lobby shapes United States West Asia policy.  

There is a general consensus among scholars on the strength of Jewish lobby in the US. There are an approximately six million Jews in the US constituting, around

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three percent of the US population. Yet they exert a disproportionate influence on the policy process. This is a function of numerous factors:

1) Substantial financial contributions to political campaigns;
2) Demographic concentration in key states;
3) High voter turn out in elections;
4) High level of institutionalisation in the Jewish community with 500 synagogues and 300 national organisations.

The Jewish lobby contributes substantially to the existence of a special relationship between America and Israel, comparable only to the one between the United States and Great Britain, emanating from root, democratic political cultural pioneering spirit and similar strategic perceptions.

2.2.4.2. American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC): The AIPAC is the most influential and one of the best-organised lobbies in Washington, it openly pushes its influence over US West Asia policy.

1) It is the only officially registered as a domestic lobbying organisation established for the purpose of influencing legislation regarding Israel and its security.
2) It functions to aid Israeli interest within the broad parameters of the American political system, on the basis of American interests.
3) While AIPAC engages in activities aimed at influencing Presidents and the members of Congress to provide for the safety of Israel, its goals include the creation of a bridge between the Jewish communities of Israel and the United States and the promotion of friendly relations between the two countries.
4) It publishes the 'Near East Report' to provide information to the policy makers from a pro-Israeli point of view and occasionally it also publishes booklets on specific issues concerning Israel.

The first Executive Director of AIPAC I.L. Kenen, claimed that, they established the organisation to counter the propaganda and the power of the “petro-diplomatic complex” which included oilmen, diplomats, missionaries and CIA agents. AIPAC was accused of dual loyalty at the expense of the American national interest.

42 Nimroad Novik (1986), The United States and Israel, Boulder: Westview, p. 56.
44 Statement by Morris J. Amitay, Director of AIPAC. Ibid., p. 227.
Prominent politicians from both parties acknowledged AIPAC's power and effectiveness. In 2001 Fortune's annual survey of Washington's premier lobbying groups, AIPAC America's pro-Israeli lobby, was ranked among the top five on the magazine's 'Power 25' list. AIPAC's fourth-place ranking keeps it as the only foreign-policy lobby on the entire list for the fourth consecutive time.\(^{45}\)

**Methods of Influence:**

1) The Jewish lobby throws its weight in favour of pro-Israel presidential candidates to run for the Presidency.

2) It tries hard to ensure after winning the election, that the incumbent would take a pro-Israel attitude.

3) Assist pro-Israeli candidates to run for Congressmen and foster pro-Israel forces inside Congress.

4) AIPAC has set up many liaison offices in universities in all the 50 States of America and often hold seminars in university to advocate the significance of keeping friendly relations with Israel.

Most senators have at least one Jewish assistant serving in their offices. AIPAC newsletter 'Near East Report,' systematically illustrates its attitude on the issues concerning Israel, on a regular basis.\(^{46}\)

AIPAC's Executive Director Howard Kohr testified on 2 April 2003 before the House Appropriation Foreign Operations Subcommittee on the importance of the US-Israel relationship and the benefits US aid to Israel provided in advancing vital American national interests, as well as how the United States and Israel are working together to combat the terrorists. He stated that, "Together, the two countries join in fighting the war on terror, maintaining the stronger military forces in the region to prevent aggression and instability." The US and Israel have forged a unique and remarkable partnership, made even more evident after 9/11. This relationship has been based on a common set of values, a shared commitment to democracy and freedom.\(^{47}\)

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2.2.5. Congress Support for the US-Israel Relationship

In the aftermath of the attacks in New York and Washington, several members of Congress spoke on the importance of a strong US-Israel relationship during such time of crisis. Senator Russ Feingold (Democratic-WI) said, “Americans will not retreat from our commitment to peace in the Middle East more specifically will never reward terrorists by reducing one iota of America’s support for Israel. If those who committed these deeds believe this is the way to destroy Israel or destroy the link between our two nations, they have just made a very large mistake.” 48

Eighty-seven Senators and 189 members of the House sent letters on 6 April 2001, to President asking him to reassess US relations with the Palestinians in the face of Palestinian violence against Israel. The legislators said the review should examine questions such as whether or not Palestinian group involved in violence should be designated as foreign terrorist organisations and whether or not those Palestinians involved in attacks against Israelis be barred from coming to United States.49

President Bush and his administration pressed Arafat to put an end to the Palestinian violence. Bush said during a new conference on 29 March 2001;

The tragic cycle of incitement, provocation, and violence has gone on far too long. Both sides must take important steps to calm the situation now. The Palestinian Authority should speak out publicly and forcefully in the language of the Palestinian people to condemn violence and terrorism. It should arrest the perpetrators of terrorist acts, and it should resume security cooperation with Israel. The Government of Israel for its part should exercise restraint in its military response. It should take steps to restore normalcy to the lives of the Palestinian people by easing closures and removing checkpoints.50

The Senate and House passed the Fiscal Year 2004 Defense Authorisation Bills by votes of 98-1 and 361-68, respectively. The legislation authorised funding for key US-Israeli defense programmes, including increases, for some programmes above the administration’s request. In a testament to the strong US-Israel alliance, the Senate voted to provide nearly $190 million for the ‘Arrow Missile Defense’ programme.51

In a letter authored by Senators Christopher Kit Bond (Republican-MO) and Charles Schumer (Democratic-NY), the Senators drew a parallel between the “terrorism that Israel has been subjected to since its birth” and the September 11 attacks. The Senators also expressed strong support for Israel, referring to the Jewish state as “our one reliable and democratic ally in the entire Middle East,” and “our close ally in the fight against terrorism.” They urged Bush to publicly express his solidarity with Israel and stated their support for war on terrorism.52

In the 104th Congress, Jewish members comprised 9 percent of the Senate and nearly 6 percent of the House. Bill Clinton nominated two Supreme Court Justices, both Jewish. In his first term, he had two Jewish Cabinet members and dozens of Jews held other key Administration posts.53

House members also expressed their solidarity to President Bush in his pro-Israeli policy. In July 2002, Majority Whip Tom Delay (Republican-TX), along with nearly 100 members of the House, sent a letter to President Bush praising him for his leadership in West Asia conflict. “You have made it clear to the American people and to the world that Israel must have the right to defend herself from the terrorist attacks that plague innocent Israeli civilians nearly every day,” reads the letter.54

2.2.6. A Source of Sympathy

The gradual evolution of the relationship from friendship to alliance could not have been achieved without the support of the American public, the majority of which consistently sympathised with Israel. Americans' affinity for Israelis also stems from their shared Judeo-Christian heritage. In addition, there are number of remarkable factors which characterise the special relationship between the US and Israel, including economic ties, academic connections, and shared value initiatives. Unlike the 1950s, no President could credibly threaten a cutoff of aid, since Congress would not support such action. For Israel, the strength of the alliance provided security.55

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53 The One Hundred Fourth United States Congress was a meeting of the legislative branch of the United States federal government, composed of the United States Senate and the United States House of Representatives. It met in Washington, DC from 3 January 1995 to 3 January 1997, during the last two years of the first term of U.S. President Bill Clinton.
55 Bard (2008), n. 34.
2.3. Combating Radicalism and Terrorism

Beginning in the early 1980's the US government claimed that international terrorism, primarily of West Asian origin is a major threat to the country's national security and that the war against terrorism should be a major focus of foreign policy. Given that radical Islamic movements have grown to prominence, it is not surprising that Islamic extremism among the Palestinian Islamic groups is undeniably reactionary. Israel and the US have been targets of terrorist attacks since the 1970's. Even as the US faced terrorism of various kinds, West Asia political violence and terrorist activities had direct correlation with the US policy towards the Palestinian issues, US strategic cooperation with Israel and with the very existence of the State of Israel.

West Asia terrorist groups and their state sponsors have been the focus of US counter-terrorism policies for several decades. The US is convinced that terrorism is used as an instrument by several states to achieve certain foreign goals. Out of seven states, which appeared in the US State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism, five happen to be from West Asia and North Africa region- Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Sudan.

The terrorist groups have retained the ability to train and prepare for terrorist missions; however, their involvement in actual operations has been limited since 9/11 partly because of persistent counter terrorism campaigns by Israeli and western agencies. The new generation of West Asia groups has been active both within and outside the region in recent years. In Israel and the Occupied Territories, the organisation Hamas and to a lesser extent the Palestinian Islamic Jihad has demonstrated considerable strength. These groups have recently conducted suicide bombings, killing hundreds of people and injuring just as many. (For instance, in 1997 Hamas operatives set off three suicide bombs in crowded Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. On 21 March of the same year a Hamas satchel bomb exploded at a Tel Aviv café, killing three persons and injuring forty eight). Exploring a strong presence in Lebanon, the Shiite Hizbollah organisation also staged a number of attacks against defence force troops and Israeli citizens in Galilee.

56 Zunes, 2003, n. 1, p. 112.
Ever since the collapse of the Camp David talks and the outbreak of the intifada, President Bush and other administration officials have faulted Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for not fighting terrorism. Bush expressed severe disappointment when the ship *Karine A* was intercepted by Israeli Defence Forces, allegedly loaded with lethal weapons. He remarked, “I can’t be any clearer in my position, and that is that he (Arafat) must do everything in his power to fight terror. Obviously, we were at first surprised and then extremely disappointed when the *Karine A* showed up loaded with weapons, weapons that could have only been intended for one thing, which was to terrorise.”

2.3. 1. 9/11 Impact on Foreign Policy

The United States suffered a massive terrorist attack on 11 September 2001. The collapse of the World Trade Centre’s Twin Tower in New York and in Pentagon was a defining event for the US foreign policy, their view on terrorism and the world at large. The US State Department’s *Patterns of Global Terrorism* 2001, (revised February 2002) calculated the direct and indirect economic costs of the destruction of the World Trade Centre at $83 billion in 2001 dollars.

Osama Bin Laden linked the failed US-led peace process in the Palestine conflict and the disproportionate US support of Israel immediately on the Al –Jazeera TV after the September 11 attacks. Osama had deep-seated grievances against the way the US has been handling the Israel Palestine peace process. Moreover, he argued that Israel was an extension of US imperialism in West Asia.

Even before 9/11, West Asia was the source of most of the world’s terror. While the Arab-Israeli conflict and its core struggle had been between Israelis and Palestinians, it was not the cause of international terror and certainly was not the reason for the 9/11. If anything, the conflict has done more to poison the atmosphere in the region than any other factor with bitterness emanating from the tragedy of the 9/11 attacks in America. Throughout West Asia, America has been accused of having a double standard. It has been perceived that America always used democracy as a weapon against those regimes it didn’t like and never against the regimes that it got along with. The US support for Israel had been a part of that Arab perception.

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According to Dennis Ross the anger, the alienation, and the hopelessness have been a breeding ground for ‘Bin Ladenism,’ and have made the US a target.\(^{60}\)

The emergence of the war on terror as the major issue on America’s national agenda immediately generated a debate between two distinct schools. The first argued that Palestinian terrorism and al-Qaeda’s terrorism were of the same family, even if a direct organisational or operational link did not exist between them. The Israeli-Palestinian issues were occasionally mentioned by the al-Qaeda’s leaders, but the organisation’s hostility to the United States was rooted in its hatred of the Egyptian and Saudi regimes buttressed by the United States, as a result of its opposition to the presence of the American military in the Arabian Peninsula.

The other school of thought produced by September 11 attacks was the United States’ support for Israel has been a major source of anger and restlessness in the Arab world, and of the rage directed at Washington. Therefore, once the US ceases its sweeping support of Israel, it should be able to establish sound relations with Muslim states. The debate soon shifted from the theoretical to the practical level.

The Bush administration’s response to the September 11 events was swift, wide ranging and decisive. Administration officials immediately attributed responsibility for the attack to Osama Bin Laden and the Al-Qaida organisation. Soon after the news of the September tragedy was received, Bush outrageously stated that the United States would hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts.

Today we’ve had a national tragedy. Two airplanes have crashed into the World Trade Center in an apparent terrorist attack on our country. I have spoken to the Vice President, to the Governor of New York, to the Director of the FBI and have ordered that the full resources of the Federal Government go to help the victims and their families and to conduct a full-scale investigation to hunt down and to find those folks who committed this act. Terrorism against our Nation will not stand.\(^{61}\)

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Today our fellow citizens, our way of life, our very freedom came under attack in a series of deliberate and deadly terrorist acts. The victims were in airplanes or in their offices: secretaries, business men and women, military and Federal workers, moms and dads, friends and neighbours. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended by evil, despicable acts of terror. ...I've directed the full resources of our intelligence and law enforcement communities to find those responsible and to bring them to justice. We will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbour them.62

The attacks prompted a global ‘war on terror’ in which the US was determined to root out al-Qaeda and the other terrorist groups within global reach. Consequently, the Bush administration began to plan a military campaign in Afghanistan.

1) A full-scale campaign was launched, using all elements of national and international power, to go after Al-Qaida and its affiliates and support structures.

2) The campaign involved rallying the international community, especially law enforcements and intelligence components to shut down Al-Qaida cells and financial networks.

3) A US military measure, ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’, was launched in early October 2001 against the Taliban regime which had harboured al-Qaida since 1996, and against Al-Qaida strongholds in Afghanistan.

4) As a result of Operation Enduring Freedom, the Taliban government was removed from power, all known Al-Qaida training sites were destroyed, and a number of Taliban and Al-Qaida leaders were killed or detained.

5) Washington reshaped its strategic policy towards war on terror, which had a far-reaching impact on international politics, especially in West Asia region.

The Bush administration issued a national security strategy document that outlined its mission in terms of its bid for global leadership in the twenty-first century documenting that US global leadership would deliver a form of ‘pax Americana’ ‘in the service of balanced power that favours freedom’. This strategy was to manifest in three priorities:

62 Address to the Nation on the Terrorist Attacks 11 September 2001, The President spoke at 8:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Ibid., p. 1100.
1) The US would lead the world in defending the peace against global terror and against aggressive regimes seeking weapons of mass destruction.

2) A commitment to peace through diplomacy.

3) America would ‘extend the peace by working to extend the benefits of liberty and prosperity as broadly as possible’ through free trade mechanisms.

As the United States focused on destroying al-Qaeda, the Bush administration made clear that the war on terrorism would be long and comprehensive—aimed not at a single terrorist group, but against all terrorists and their sponsors. “Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.” America would direct every resource at their command every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network, according to President Bush in his 20 September 2001 address to the nation.63

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld outlined a plan for a series of coalitions against terror. He indicated that even if countries known to sponsor and harbour terrorists assist the United States in going after Bin Laden, they would not be exempted from the later stages of America’s war unless they ceased their support of such activities. In a series of public statements and private assurances, the Bush administration noted that Hezbollah and Hamas, which are both designated by the United States as foreign terrorist organisations, would be held accountable for their actions.

Secretary of States Colin Powell said rogue states such as Iran and Syria, which are both labeled as state sponsors of terrorism by the US State Department, “can’t be one kind of terrorism and against another kind of terrorism.” They have to change their pattern to go against all terrorist organisations, and to be in a coalition against terrorism.64

2.3.2. US Policy Shift towards Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

It soon emerged that the US West Asia policy after 9/11 could not be detached from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The collapses of the Twin Tower’s shock wave sped through the United States and reverted all around the globe. The US reviewed its relation with West Arab regimes and its approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The US leaders found themselves increasingly pre-occupied with West Asia from which they had previously sought to distance themselves. The war on terror spread out over broad areas of the globe, but its repercussions were being increasingly focused on West Asia, particularly on the Arab States.65

Critics have argued that American intervention in West Asia is severely biased and dangerous in terms of longevity of local regimes and exploitive in terms of the region’s oil and other resources. Others maintained that various US administrations had intervened protecting values of freedom and independence, promotion of democracy, and to stop terrorism from threatening the security of the global order.66 Terrorist activities that threaten peace, prosperity and stability of Israel and create turbulence in the oil-rich region of the world cause additional concern due to their implications for domestic American politics and international economic stability.

During the period preceding the September 11 attacks, the neo-conservative belief was that America’s foreign policy should be prepared to take the initiative and not merely react in confronting national security threats.67 In general, the insistence that the US should incorporate in its defence posture the principle of pre-emption, as the most appropriate tactic in the war against terrorism remained in early period outside the operational code of the Bush presidency.68 The neo-conservative agenda increasingly permeated and influenced the thinking of several policymakers and defence analysts at the Pentagon over the preceding decade.

Their position argued that overwhelming power should be used against either tyrants or terrorist organisations worldwide as the necessary springboard for replacing such states or networks with peaceful democratic regimes. Thus, the trauma of

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September 11 catalysed Pentagon officials to strongly support the neo-conservative military prescription for forcefully eliminating international terrorism and its supporting axis of evil as an avenue to realising the dream of an unimpaired global democratic order.

Contrary to the traditional American strategic interests and objectives in terms of an accelerated and peaceful democratisation process, and to the defensive logic of containment doctrine throughout the Cold War, the September 11 attack generated a new and vastly expanded definition of the scope of national security threats. It called upon the administration to abandon or downgrade (at least temporarily), traditional tools of diplomacy such as deterrence and concentrate instead on the strategy of military pre-emption as the means of establishing a peaceful, democratic, and durable world order.

Motivated by an acute and sudden sense of vulnerability, the Bush administration decided that it could no longer solely rely on a reactive posture as in the past. Hence, the threats and the magnitude of potential harm that could be caused by enemies’ choice of weapons would not permit that option. “We cannot let our enemies strike first”.

American national interest in West Asia region before 1990 was to maintain the American presence as dominant in the region through the curbing of Soviet expansionism. It is argued that in the wake of the Cold War and 9/11, elements of American policy-making elite contend that its national interest in the region is best served by replacing Islamist expansionism with the promotion of liberal democratisation across the region- even if this meant direct military intervention to achieve regime change and impose democracy from above. Another national interest was to support pro-western states and allies in the region through aid programmes to countries such as Egypt or arms supplies and defence contracts to states such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia.

The 11 September attacks brought the US administration to adopt an uncompromising policy against terrorism, impacting Israel to action against the

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Palestinian Authority with less restrain. Israel escalated its operations against the PA, seeking particularly to weaken Arafat’s position and stature since 2001.71

In 2001 April, 53 former US officials accused the White House of sacrificing America’s credibility in the Arab World and endangering its diplomats and troops because of the Bush administration’s unstinting support for Sharon. “By closing the door to negotiations with Palestine and the possibility of Palestinian state, you have proved that the US is not an even handed peace partner”. The September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States had drawn Bush a closer to Sharon. Bush saw stark parallels between Palestinian suicide bombings and Al-Qaeda terror. He adopted Sharon’s position that there could be no serious negotiations and no Palestinian state without new Palestinian leadership.

2.4. US Israeli-Palestinian Policy: Critical Appraisal

As the political atmosphere in the region changed, relations between the two countries have been dominated by a different set of priorities in which American peace initiatives have on more than one occasion conflicted with Israeli political orientations. Aaron Friedberg argued that everything Israel does is not necessarily right or deserving of American support.72 Meanwhile, Dennis Ross, stated that foreign policy is shaped by leaders and events, not lobbies.

The truth is the Israel lobby doesn’t always get its way. It failed to prevent several major arms sales to Arab nations. It has failed to get the U.S. embassy in Israel moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. It failed to prevent the Clinton administration from crafting a peace proposal that would have divided Jerusalem in two. In fact, never in the time that I led the American negotiations on the Middle East peace process did we take a step because “the lobby” wanted us to. Now did we shy away from one because “the lobby” opposed it.73

Although AIPAC and others have influence, they don’t distort US policy or undermine American interests. Both Republican and Democratic presidents alike have consistently believed in a special relationship with Israel because values matter in foreign policy. Israel and the United States share the view that the United States has a predominant role and responsibility in West Asia peace-making, but in the past Israel has disagreed with the US view in its role as an impartial peace broker among the parties of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Most Israelis and its supporters have wanted the United States to favour only Israeli positions.

71 Interview with Jason Lewis-Berry, Foreign Policy Consultant, Washington DC, on 20 October 2007 in Boston, MA.
Past records of US arms transfers to Arab countries have been sources of friction in Israeli-US relations. Israel perceived the US arms transfers to the Arabs as threatening its security. The United States has provided arms to West Asian countries for individual and collective defence against aggression. For decades the US had pursued a fairly consistent policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:

1) Help Israel to be strong, while pressing it to make concessions;
2) Expectations to provide financial aid to Israel;
3) Sell it high-technology armament;
4) Support it diplomatically in the United Nations;
5) Assumption that American leaders would press Israel to make territorial concessions to it adversaries.74

However, the United States failed to facilitate the just and lasting peace between the parties in accordance with Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and other sources of international law. The US involvement could be assessed to identify the reasons why its involvement has not yielded better results.

2.4.1. A Controversial Honest Broker: The certain bases for US involvement in the Palestinian-Israeli peace process have been to show that the United States is the primary foreign power in West Asia problems. The United States has promoted itself to the parties in the region as an honest broker wishing to promote Israel’s security as well as Palestinian national aspirations.

1) However, the US has allegedly become increasingly identified with Israeli ideological assumptions.

2) The United States began the peace process based on the goal of implementing UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. These resolutions, as repeatedly interpreted by the international community, simply meant that Israel must withdraw from the Arab territories it occupied in 1967, if it wants to have peaceful relations with its neighbours.

3) The US advocated position that the West Bank and Gaza are disputed territories, for which the Palestinians must bargain.

4) Settlements, for example, opposed by Presidents Carter, Reagan, and Senior Bush, have been tacitly endorsed by recent US policy in the region.

5) Israel’s security has been the primary concerns for the US negotiators while ignoring the long-term development of the occupied Palestinian territories.

2.4.2. Domestic Political Concerns versus Peace: The US-Israeli domestic political concerns override the goals of a lasting peace;

1) The original Oslo Accords had mandated that the peace talks be concluded in 1988 with a Palestinian state and an Israeli state living in freedom, security, and equality side by side.

2) The Palestinians were compelled to focus on Interim issues in negotiations, rather than addressing the key permanent status issues, as Israel attempted to colonise the areas of the West Bank and Gaza before beginning final status talks.

3) The timetable for reaching agreements has been based on immediate domestic concerns even when the necessary background work on substantive issues had not been done.

4) Palestinians alleged that once mandated by domestic political considerations in Israel and the United States, Palestinians had been placed under pressure to sign weak and vague agreements that could be used by political leaders to show progress to their constituencies.

5) The importance of a just and lasting peace has been overshadowed by the need for yet another temporary or interim agreement that would provide only short-term political gain to some of those involved at the risk of creating tremendous problems for the long-term stability of the area.

Normalisation before an end to the occupation:

1) The United States refused to promoted the implementation of already signed agreements between Israelis and Palestinians that could have succeeded in promoting normalisation.

Process over substance:

2) Under US supervision, the Palestinian-Israeli “peace process” has become a goal in and of itself.

3) The ever-increasing number of Palestinian-Israeli agreements brokered by the United States has caused Palestinians to become increasingly wary of US
involvement in peace process that failed to usher a permanent Israeli-Palestinian peace.\textsuperscript{75}

On the other hand, Barry Rubin view was such that the United States chose options that reflected the fact it did not seek to dominate the region, destroy Islam, undermine Arabism, or take other actions of which it has been accused. He said, whatever America has done or done wrong in West Asia, it has used only a small portion of its potential power, stopped far short of what it could have done, and avoided intervention whenever possible.

1) The US did not try to destroy Arafat and the PLO, even when they were responsible for anti-American terrorism and aligned with the erstwhile USSR.

2) The US did not have an “anti-Palestinian” policy except in the sense that it opposed Palestinian effort to destroy Israel’s existence, while supporting efforts to find a compromise solution to the conflict that would help satisfy moderate Palestinian goals.

3) It did not take advantage of USSR’s disappearance as a super-power to impose anything on anybody, and certainly not to establish American domination in the region. Despite having won the Cold War, the United States did not seek to take revenge on regimes that had supported the losing side.

The Americans alleged that Arab and Iranian media hardly ever say anything positive about the United States. They simply ignore the truth about US policy and distort the reality in certain ways. Even those who benefit from US help- rarely praise America, shut off contrary information and constantly fed antagonistic views, thus it would be hardly surprising that the masses were hostile to the United States. Those who would present a different view were discouraged by peer pressure, censorship, and fear of being labeled as US agents.

Clearly, the United States has been Israel’s main ally since the 1970’s. More accurately, US had helped Israel to survive the efforts of its Arab neighbours to remove it from the map. The US-Israel alliance was created and reinforced because the Arab states took certain hostile steps, including aligning themselves with USSR and using such tactics as sponsoring anti-American terrorism. Rubin further stated, the radical forces in the Arab world objected to all aspects of the US policy towards

Israel because of their own objectives and interests. They wanted to eliminate Israel, and saw US policy as blocking that effort. American success in achieving a resolution of the conflict would strengthen US leverage in the region, making it better able to counter radical forces.

From the 1970’s the United States has repeatedly sought opportunities to advance a negotiated solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It put such peacemaking at the top of its international agenda, with its highest officials devoting a considerable portion of their time to this issue. Negotiating a compromise agreement was always in the US interests precisely because it did want good relations with the Arab world. By resolving this passionate issue the US would be better able to promote regional stability, reduce the possibility of war, and ensure its own regional position.76

**Conclusion**

The Palestinian problem continues to be the most vital aspect of West Asian crisis. It is the Palestinians which are at the heart of the problem. The prominent role of the United States in West Asian affairs is an accepted and well-known fact. It was mostly because of the United States support that Israel as a Jewish state could survive and extend its territories at the expense of the Arab neighbours.77 It is the American help—military, financial, and diplomatic, which sustains Israel and indeed strengthens her to the extent of waging very costly wars and retaining ill-gotten territories. President Jimmy Carter has strongly advocated Palestinian rights, even during the Camp David talks between Egypt and Israel, and repeatedly emphasised the illegality of Israel’s settlement policy.

The Arabs alleged that America's support has made the Israelis arrogant and less concerned about criticisms against them in the international forums. America's fervent support of Israel had long been a determining factor in West Asia politics.

There is no doubt that the Americans have started taking interest in the Palestinian question. Initially Palestinians were considered a mere refugee but later accepted a nation deserving a homeland but failed to push through. Arabs, Muslims and many other consider the US as the only power that is in position to restrain Israel

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from continuing with its policy of driving out Arabs and settling Jews in Occupied Palestine. Since America alone is in a position to exert enough pressure on Israel it can compel Israel to behave responsibly. There is much the United States could contribute to encourage justice, peace, and stability in West Asia but only if it could learn from the mistakes and failures of the past years. Much of the issues remained at stake when the Israeli occupation and settlements continued to expand, peace became much harder to achieve.