Preface

This thesis makes a modest attempt to examine Japan's policies towards the Middle East countries since 1973. The Middle East region has assumed critical importance in the conduct of Japan's foreign policy ever since the global energy crisis. Before the energy crisis, Japan tended to deal with the region simply on commercial terms in that oil was available in plenty at a fairly cheap price. Moreover in the early post war years, Japan itself was faced with formidable domestic and foreign policy issues. At home, it had to reconstruct its war-shattered economy and restore confidence to its citizens. In the external field, it had to make sincere and strenuous efforts to atone for its past military adventurism particularly in Asia. It, therefore, found it prudent to pursue a low key posture in the external sphere while showing a great interest in building up its economy rapidly. As early as September 1951, it forged a security alliance with the United States which has acted as the copingstone of its foreign policy since then. The alliance permitted Japan to be relatively free from its security concerns and enabled it to concentrate on domestic economic reconstruction. As Japan started making rapid economic progress, its energy needs also went up enormously.
After 1973 when the Middle East countries increasingly used oil as a political weapon, Japan's policies in the region were put to severe test. As an ally of the U.S., Tokyo naturally wanted as far as possible to follow American policies in the region, but since Japan's dependence on the Middle East oil was a life-and-death question, it had to safeguard its own economic interests. It did not find it prudent to follow the US on all issues. One can clearly see sharp differences in the approaches of the two countries on issues like political developments in Iran after the fall of the Shah, the role of the PLO in the Middle East peace process, the Iran-Iraq war, the Gulf crisis, etc. Japan felt that its national interests called for maintaining good relations with the countries of the Middle East. It, therefore, promoted trade and investment ties with them. It also offered Official Development Assistance to them on a generous scale. But at the same time, it also took care to see that it did not offend the US strategic goals in the region as much as possible.

The present thesis is divided into 6 chapters. The first chapter traces the background history of the relations between Japan and the Middle East until the 1973 oil crisis. It makes a brief reference to the formidable issues that Japan faced soon after regaining its sovereignty in 1952. It recounts the national and international environment in which Japan had to shape its post-war diplomacy. It also highlights the
complex environment that prevailed in the Middle East region soon after the end of the Second World War.

The Second chapter deals with the impact of the global energy crisis on Japan. For the first time Japan found it essential to look at the Middle East region in a new perspective. The chapter tries to bring out the intensity of Japan's reaction to the hardening attitudes of the oil producing countries.

The third chapter makes a detailed study of the attempts made by the successive Japanese governments to maintain favourable relations with the Arab countries without at the same time causing any major setbacks in the relations between Japan and the United States.

The fourth chapter deals with the attempts made by Japan to increase its economic stakes in the Middle East region by means of trade, investment and Official Development Assistance.

The fifth chapter focuses attention on Japan's non-Arab friends in the region - Iran and Israel. It naturally deals with issues like the Iran-Iraq war, the hostage crisis, the improved relations with Israel, etc.

The sixth chapter makes a detailed analysis of Japan's attitude towards the Gulf crisis, and the serious dilemmas that Japan's foreign policy encountered. After the end of the Gulf war, there were new
opportunities for Japan's participation in the peace-making process. The chapter throws light on Japan's role in the Middle East peace process.

The last chapter carries the concluding observations.

Lastly I would like to state that in writing this thesis, I have mainly depended on various primary sources made available to me in India and Japan. I have also conducted interviews with official and non-officials connected with the region and this subject.

It is necessary at this point to state that the main thrust of this thesis is to examine Japan's policies on the major issues affecting the Middle East region. The present thesis does not attempt to cover the whole gamut of the Japan's relations with all countries of the region.

Lastly a word about Japanese names used in this thesis. They are rendered with the personal names first followed by the surnames.