CHAPTER - I
CHAPTER - I

Japan-Middle East Relations- A Historical Review

I.1 The Pre-War Period

The Middle East region was known to the outside world from ancient times. It occupies a unique place in the world history. The region was the centre of various ancient civilizations and was the birthplace of three major religions. The region is strategically located having outlets to the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe. Since the cultivatable land was meager, the people of the region were engaged in different kinds of trade with distant places. They were travelling a great deal as traders and religious missionaries, even before the discovery of the new sea-routes by the Europeans. They were also in contact with India, China and South Asian countries. But Japan, being a small island country in the East, was not on the itinerary of the Arab travelers. However, the Europeans, who came to Japan during the 16th century brought knowledge and information totally new to the Japanese at that time\(^1\). Through them, Japanese learned a great deal about the Islamic civilization. But Japan's self-imposed

\(^1\) In an article written in 1940, entitled "The History of Cultural Exchange between Japan and the Islamic World - Pre-Meiji Japanese knowledge about Islam and its World", the late Dr. Hajime Kobayashi traced the process by which Japanese acquired directly or indirectly knowledge about the Middle East and its culture. For details, see Dialogue-Middle East and Japan. Symposium on Cultural Exchange published by the Japan Foundations, Tokyo, 1977, (The International Symposium: Cultural Base of Mutual Understanding between the Middle East and Japan- held from March 30 to April 8, 1977).
isolation from the outside world for over two and a half centuries from
1600, severely restricted its interactions with and knowledge about
the outside world. This self-imposed isolation was an attempt to
preserve the socio-political structure created by the Tokugawa
Shogunate. It was aimed at insulating the country from Western
influences including Christianity. It was also meant to be a safeguard
against the colonization of the country by European powers as had
happened in South and South East Asia.

However, in 1853, Comdr. Mathew C. Perry of the United States
succeeded in breaking the isolation of Japan. The success of his
mission paved the way for the opening of Japan to the outside world.
He succeeded in persuading the Shogunate to enter into a treaty of
Peace and Amity with the United States\(^2\). This was followed by the
conclusion of similar such treaties with other powers like Russia,
Britain, Netherlands, France etc\(^3\). The opening of Japan to the outside
world and the momentous changes in the old social and political
structures of Japan culminated in the collapse of the Tokugawa
Shogunate in 1868 and the restoration to the sovereignty of the Meiji

\(^2\) Treaty of Peace and Amity, between the United States of America and Japan.
Signed on March 31, 1854, at Kanagawa. Source- The Meiji Japan Through
Contemporary Sources, vol. 1. Basic documents 1854-1889. Compiled and
published by the Centre for East Asian Cultural Studies, Tokyo, p.1-4.

\(^3\) (a) Convention between Great Britain and Japan for Regulating the
Admission of British ship into ports of Japan, October 14, 1854 in Nagasaki.
(b) Treaty between Russia and Japan, February 7, 1855 in Shimoda.
(c) Treaty of Commerce between the Netherlands and Japan, January 30,
1856 in Nagasaki.
Emperor. The Meiji Restoration of 1868, heralded the opening of the modern period in the history of Japan. During the Meiji Period (1868-1912) Japan set out to achieve the status of a powerful nation through an ambitious modernization programme encompassing political, social and economic spheres. This process opened up its relations with more and more countries and even the far away region like the Middle East came into contact with Japan. But Japan's relations with the outside world in the early Meiji period were largely limited to the West. The early Meiji Japanese, who came out of seclusion, were naturally attracted by the European and North American cultures and civilizations. They regarded the Western civilization as the most advanced and hence considered it as a model for their country's progress.

During this period, the Middle East region was under the fetters of colonialism and remained in stagnation and seclusion. However, a few Japanese became aware of the Islamic world, its importance and its contribution to the modern world. This knowledge led to the appearance of the first Japanese biography of Prophet Mohammed in 1876 by Count Tadasu Hayashi, who became foreign minister twice towards the end of the Meiji period. The Egyptian nationalist movement in 1881-82 led by Ahamed Arabi also attracted the

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4 Osamu Ikeda - *Arab Teachings in Japan, Arab-Japanese Relations, Tokyo Symposium* (held on 27-29 March, 1979) - p.75
attention of some Japanese scholars. This led to the publication of "An Early Modern History of Egypt" (*Egiputo Kenseishi*), by a political novelist, Shiro Shiba (Tokai Sanshi), in 1898\(^5\). The Holy Quran was translated into Japanese by Kenichi Sakamoto in 1900\(^6\). But popular interest in the Middle East remained fairly low in the Japanese society. The Middle East region became somewhat attractive to Japan when it started cotton trade with Egypt in the 1890's\(^7\). But the trade could not expand as the Western powers were dominating the region with their restrictive trade. The tariff autonomy enjoyed by the West through various treaties\(^8\) was helping them with reduced tariff rates and easy flow of their goods to this region, particularly the textile goods. Japan's trade with the region therefore remained very small until the 1920s.

During this period, however, Japan did not show any deep political interest in the affairs of the region unlike other mercantile countries such as the United States, Britain, France and other European powers. In fact, by the turn of the 20\(^{th}\) century, Japan also emerged as a military power and was getting established as a major player in the world scene. Japan's non-involvement in the region


\(^6\) Osamu Ikeda p. 75.


during this period can be interpreted in different ways. Japan wanted to conserve its new political image gained after the Meiji Restoration and also felt the need to be on friendly terms with the advanced industrialized countries of the West. Any overt Japanese interest in the region would have been mistaken by the Western powers. Japan, therefore, wanted to consolidate its new military strength gained from the victory in the Sino-Japanese war (1894-95). It was most interested in strengthening its position in the neighbouring region. Its interest in Korea and Manchuria had already aroused the ire of the Western powers. In 1902 Japan entered into an alliance with Great Britain, and this alliance constituted a landmark in Japan’s diplomacy. One of the aims of the alliance was to stem the rising influence of Russia in Asia. Britain, who was not happy with Russia after the Boxer Rebellion, (1900), feared that if Russia were given a free hand it would affect its interests in China and India. The Americans were also interested in containing Russia as their commercial interests were affected by Russian interference in Manchuria. In short, in the first decade of the 20th century, when Japan was consolidating its military power, its political priorities were how to contain Russia and consolidate its friendship with Britain. It did not evince any deep interest in the Middle East region.

It should also be borne in mind that Japan was quite ignorant about the potentiality of the natural resources of the region. During that period the exploitation of the oil-wealth of the region was not developed and even that was monopolized by the industrially advanced countries of Europe and the United States. Japan, being a new-comer in the industrialized world and its industries being not oil-dependent, the need for oil was till not felt by Japan. It was nearly self-sufficient in its energy need and was relying primarily on its coal reserves.

During the second decade of the 20th Century, internally Japan witnessed major political changes. The newly acquired military superiority as evidenced in its victory over Russia (1905) and the annexation of Korea in 1910, was leading the country towards militarism. The political changes after the Meiji rule in 1912, and the indirect political gains received through the spoils of First World War etc. were forcing Japan to expand its influence and enter the world scene as a major power, instead of restricting its field of activities to the neighbouring region. After the War, status as a big power in the League of Nation added tremendous prestige to Japan.

Meanwhile, Britain who became victorious in the World War I manipulated the Middle East scenario after the fall of the Ottoman
Empire. Through the Balfour Declaration in 1917\textsuperscript{11}, an atmosphere was created to divide the region and new sources of conflicting interests began to surface. As an ally of the West, Japan was informed about the new arrangements. It merely supported the Balfour Declaration and participated in the San Reno conference in March 1920, where Iraq, Palestine and Trans Jordan were mandated to Britain, and Syria and Lebanon to France. Later it also participated in the Lausanna Peace Treaty of 1923, which decided the fate of the Ottoman Empire and thereby most of the Middle East countries\textsuperscript{12}. But Japan's political role was very limited. It did not have any territorial ambitions in the region. Instead it started taking interest in the economic sphere. In December 1919, it established a consulate at Port Said to protect its shipping through the Suez Canal. In 1925, Japan started an Embassy in Istanbul, a consulate General in Alexandria in 1926, and a Legation in Tehran in 1929. In 1936, Japan set up a Legation in Cairo, and Consulates in Beirut and Casablanca in 1937. In 1939, a Legation was set up in Baghdad\textsuperscript{13}. During the inter-war period, Japan also concluded commercial agreements with various Middle East countries, when they regained their tariff autonomy from the Western countries. Japan signed a treaty of commerce and navigation on a most favoured nation basis with Turkey after the

\textsuperscript{11} Balfour Declaration of 1917 (Text) - Appendix - A.
\textsuperscript{12} Hiroshi Shimizu - Introduction to Japan's Economic and Political Relation with the Middle East in the Inter-War Period. \textit{Occasional paper series. No.2}, 1985, Department of Japanese Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{13} Horoshi Shimizu - in Sugihara & Allan. p. 30.
Lausanne Treaty of 1923. This treaty was later renewed and replaced by a new Turco-Japanese treaty of Commerce and Navigation on a most-favoured nation basis on October 11, 1930. The Iranian-Japanese Treaty of Navigation was signed in Tehran on 31 May 1929. With Egypt, Japan signed a temporary agreement on a most favoured nation basis. Japan also got the most favoured nation treatment in the mandated countries of Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq, by virtue of its membership with the League of Nations. The Franco-Japanese Commercial Treaty of 1911, helped to get same treatment at the French zone of Morocco. Only in the French colony and protectorate of Algeria and Tunisia in North Africa, Japan faced the tariff problem.

Simultaneously, Japan introduced various facilities to expand its trade in the Middle East region during the inter-war period. In 1927 a commercial museum was established in Cairo, and another one in 1929 in Istanbul, to work as agency for Japanese firms, to settle the commercial disputes with local and Japanese merchants. A number of large Japanese firms set up their own trade representative offices in the major distribution centres of the region including Alexandria, Baghdad, Tehran, Beirut etc. The Yokohama Specie Bank

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(Japan’s main foreign exchange bank) also opened up a branch in Alexandria in 1926\textsuperscript{15}.

During this period, Japan also established its first direct shipping routes to Middle East. It also provided annual grants to the ships to make additional calls at Beirut, Istanbul etc from April 1929. In view of the growing demand for Japanese shipping, companies like \textit{Nippon Yusen Kaisha} (NYK) and Yamashita Steamship started monthly shipping service to the Gulf and extended its Yokohoma-Bombay route to certain Gulf ports. In addition, the Mitsui Shipping and \textit{Osaka Shosen Kaisha} also started their monthly shipping service to various parts in the Gulf from the mid 1930s\textsuperscript{16}.

These arrangements helped the Japanese merchants to increase their export to Middle East with lower transportation cost and compete with the Western merchants. As a result, Japanese trade particularly in textile goods, expanded at a high scale despite the global depression. However, Japan’s imports from this region were small in quantity compared to its exports. Since the oil drilling was not developed, and the region remained primarily as an agrarian society, without any manufactured product, Japan was not much interested in the region. The Japanese merchants preferred to buy


similar products from the U.S. and the British colonies. Even the high quality Egyptian cotton was not attractive for them as it was expensive. They preferred the low-priced cotton from India and America. During the 1930s, Japan also made some attempts for investment in the region, particularly in Turkey and Iraq. But these attempts failed.

Even though the region was getting developed slowly because of its oil resources, Japan did not show any undue interest. Its limited oil requirement was mainly met by the supplies from the U.S. and the Dutch East Indies. Japan's oil import from the Gulf was limited to Baharin only. However, when its relations with West became strained in the closing years of 1930s, Japan attempted to obtain concessions from Saudi Arabia, where a major oil field was discovered by the American in March 1938. Japan sent a mission headed by Tomoyoshi Yokoyama, a senior diplomat to Saudi Arabia in March 193917. But Saudi Arabia was suspicious about Japan's intentions and the talks in this regard failed. Instead, Saudi Arabia preferred the Americans who offered best possible terms for the oil concession. Hence Japan's oil import from the Middle East region remained very negligible.

In the 1930s and early 40s the Western Powers, particularly the British, began to see Japan's militarization with great suspicion.

17 The Mission Known as Yokoyama Mission visited Saudi Arabia from 22 March to 18 April 1939 - Source: Kunio Katakura and Motoko Katakura- 'Japan and the Middle East', Middle East Institute of Japan, Tokyo, 1991, p.16.
Japan's annexation of Manchuria in 1931 and its withdrawal from the League of Nation in 1935 and its recognition of Italy's invasion of Abyssinia in October 1935 signaled that Japan was moving towards the 'Rome-Berlin Axis' of Mussolini and Hitler. On the other side, Britain moved towards the United States. As a counter measure Japan tried to encourage independence movements in various colonies against colonial powers, particularly against Britain. Japan also encouraged Arab nationalism in the Middle East. It promoted Islamic activities in Japan through Muslim Associations, Muslims publications, Pilgrimage to Mecca and promotion of knowledge on Islamic affairs among the Japanese people through lectures. The Tokyo Mosque was opened during this period – 12 May 1938.18 Japan also legalized Islam and placed it on a footing of equality with the other religions. The Prime Minister of Japan, Kiichiro Heranuma declared on 23 March 1939, "Islam shall be legalized under the constitutional law no.28, and shall be treated equal to any other religion in Japan"19 According to the Japanese Ambassador in Istanbul, T. Taketomi and the Minister at Kabul M. Kitada, "it is necessary for Japan to make the Muslim people come to understand that our Islamic policy aims at assisting them in their liberation movement against their (Western) oppressors....As for the countries

under British influence, we have to make it clear to the people that we are sympathetic for their desire to get rid of British tutelage, and are prepared to lend our hands for this purpose. The similar methods will be used in the countries bordering Russia." As a part of this Islamic Policy Japan tried to open up legations in Iraq and Saudi Arabi and extend the jurisdictions of the Beirut Consulate to cover Palestine and Trans-Jordan in 1938-39. This policy of mobilizing Muslim forces against Britain led to close political relations with certain Middle East countries, notably Iraq. But Japan could not extend this policy to other Middle East countries as Iraq’s anti-British Prime Minster Rashid Al-Gaulini was replaced by Taha al-Hashmi in May 1941, and a pro-British regime was established.

1.2 Second World War and After

Japan’s entry into the Second World war against the Allied Powers transformed the entire gamut of its foreign policy preferences. Though it tried to encourage and support nationalist and independence movements against the West, particularly in the British colonies in South East Asia, it could not do much in the Middle East. On the other hand, the influence of the Western countries in the Middle East was so strong that it compelled most of the countries of the region to sever their diplomatic relations with Japan. Japan’s

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21 H. Wakabayashi - Kaikyo Sekai to Nihon (The Islamic World and Japan), Tokyo, 1938.
traumatic defeat in the war in August 1945 following the dropping of atom bomb shattered its ambition to become a great military power.

Meanwhile, along with the war, the spread of communism, call for self-rule and nationalist movements and independence struggles in various Afro-Asian countries, dramatically changed the face of the world, particularly in the political and economic fields. Though Britain and most of the colonial powers were on the winning side, they could not withstand the popular movements against their rule in their colonies. As result a decolonization process started, and more and more countries in Asia and Africa got their independence. In the Middle East also, this process resulted in the creation of 20 odd countries. But its strategic location and rich deposits of oil tempted the West to keep their influence under some pretext. The Western industrialized powers realized that the politics of the coming years would be influenced more by the control exercised by nations over its natural resources than the mere military strength. This realization forced all major powers to carve out pockets of influence in the region. The spread of communism and the emergence of a bi-polar world controlled by the United States and the Soviet Union, further aggravated the competition for dominance. The West, which had been controlling the region for so many decades, and was aware of the political, social and religious sentiments of the people of the region, deliberately created a very sentimental and politically volatile situation.

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in the region. The establishment of a Jewish state in May 1948 in the midst of the Arab-dominated Middle East region, while denying the legitimate rights of the Palestine-people to establish an independent nation deeply hurt the sentiments and religious feelings of the Arabs. By this act, the West was able to set up a political situation which enabled the Western powers to keep their presence in the region. The Western support for the Jewish state of Israel, in its economic development and military growth, posed a serious challenge to the Arab countries. The demand for the establishment of Palestinian home-state by the Arabs and their refusal to recognise the Jewish State of Israel thus aggravated the situation and made the region a volatile area of the world. Japan, kept aloof from those issues, as it was not in a position to involve itself in the region's affairs as Japan was under the Allied Occupation. But Japan's policy towards the Middle East after regaining its independence from the Allied occupation, remained very passive till the 1973 oil crisis. This policy, however, deserves serious review and analyses in the context of the overall changes effected in Japan's internal political set up in general and the special relationship with United States and its pre-occupations with its economic recovery, in particular.
I.3 A General Survey of Japan - Middle East Relations before the Oil Crisis. (1952-73)

Japan's crushing defeat at the hands of the Allied Powers and the subsequent American occupation resulted in a drastic transformation of its political, economic and social structures. The reforms introduced by the Allied Occupation authorities during the occupation period were sweeping and comprehensive. They changed Japan from a military state to a peace-loving country. A new constitution was virtually imposed on the Japanese. When the Allied Occupation ended in April 1952, Japan had already forged a security alliance with the United States. It severely curtailed Japan's political and military ambitions. In the initial stages, Japan's relations with the outside world were restricted within the framework of the United States' Cold-War policies. In the words of William Borders, Japan's foreign policy during the period was "subservient to American diplomacy"."22 However, the United States was very much interested in the economic recovery of Japan and was encouraging it to adopt the free-market economy against the onslaughts of Marxism, sponsored by the communist bloc. Japan, taking advantage of the world economic situation and encouraged and supported by the United States, soon charted out a path of economic recovery through rapid

industrialization. In the backdrop of such an adverse international climate, Japan thought that it would be more prudent to concentrate on its economic reconstruction instead of seeking to play any role in the global politics at least for the time being. Since the United States was a super power, heading the non-communist industrialized world, Japan's allegiance to the U.S. became stronger and more apparent. The United States security cover over Japan and its special relationship further strengthened this bond. In fact, this in turn limited its international role and restricted it to adopt a low-key posture.

Hence, Japan's relations with the Middle East region in the first decade of its independence were very minimal and passive. The region itself was witnessing a very complicated political scenario following the creation of Israel. Consequently, the Middle East was confronted with a volatile situation with constant Arab-Israeli conflicts. Since the conflict was on the issue of the Palestine homeland and the survival of Israel, the region became the battleground of super-power rivalry as the United States took special interest in protecting the state of Israel. Although Japan kept away from contentious political issues and concentrated on its own economic recovery, it got indirectly involved in the Middle East issues because of its special relation with the United States. But, the economic importance of the region tended to increase for Japan with its growing dependence on Middle East oil for
its own rapid industrialization. However, till the oil crisis of 1973, Japan did not feel the need for cultivating closer friendship with the majority of the countries of the region as its oil requirements were met by the Western oil companies. Japan supported the US policy in the region on almost all-major political questions including the contentious Palestine issue.

The origin of the Palestine issue goes back to the time of the Israel king David,(1004-965 BC) who defeated Palestine—a name derived from the Philistines, who migrated from Crete and Asia Minor around 1000 B.C. and set up an independent kingdom\textsuperscript{23}. The land was later occupied by various rulers and was claimed by Muslims, Jews and Christians as theirs.

But the present day Palestine problem, the main cause of the Arab-Israeli conflict started only after the First World War. After the war, both the Arabs and the Jews who had helped Britain and other Allied Powers expected that the stretch of land that was liberated from the Turkish rule would be given to them. But, the Jews under the leadership of Chaim Weizmann succeeded in the founding of a Zionist state in Palestine as a result of the historic Balfour Declaration\textsuperscript{24}. Despite the Arab protest, Palestine came under the British mandate through the Paris Peace Conference and the League Council at San

\textsuperscript{23} ‘Facts about Israel’ - Israel Information Centre Jerusalem, Israel 1999, p.10.  
\textsuperscript{24} Balfour Declaration (Text), Appendix – A.
Remo approved it on 25 April 1920. The preamble and various provisions of the mandate formally recognized "the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine", and authorized the mandatory power to undertake necessary political and administrative measures to make a "Jewish National Home". The Balfour Declaration, which was a vaguely worded British promise to the Jews, thus accorded international legitimacy. Meanwhile the persecution of the Jews by the Nazi Germany created a massive exodus of Jews to Palestine and generated a lot of uneasiness in the area during the inter-war period. Even though the British tried to satisfy both the Arabs and Jews by various partition plans\textsuperscript{25}, one or the other party rejected them. Thus the Balfour Declaration created a division between the Jews and the Arabs and sowed the seeds of mistrust and suspicion among themselves.

After the Second World War, the Palestine issue was referred to the United Nations by Britain on 2 April 1947. Accordingly, the General Assembly established an eleven nation Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP)\textsuperscript{26}. The UN Committee in its report submitted on 31 August 1947, proposed two alternative solutions to solve the issue.


\textsuperscript{26} The Eleven Member Committee included Australia, Canada, Czechoslovakia Guatemala, India, Iran, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden, Uruguay and Yugoslavia.
The US actively lobbied for the seven nation majority plan, which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 29 November, 1947 vide resolution 181 (11)A\textsuperscript{27}. It provided for the division of Palestine into two independent Arab and Jewish states with Jerusalem under UN Jurisdiction. But the Arabs rejected the UN Resolution. In December 1947 the Council of the League of Arab States declared that it would prevent the implementation of the Resolution by whatever means necessary\textsuperscript{28}. The Arabs continued their opposition to the partition plan and Britain decided not to implement this plan unless both parties accepted it. The Jews seeing that an armed confrontation with the Arabs was imminent and inevitable prepared themselves for the worst. As anticipated, an armed conflict soon occurred in which the Jews had an upper hand and occupied more territories. Israel occupied 77\% of the Palestine territory instead of 57\% allocated originally by the UN, and claimed Jerusalem as its Capital. The Jews declared the establishment of the state of Israel on 14 May 1948.

Thus, a Jewish state was established in Palestine against the wishes of the Arabs and in clear violation of terms and conditions of the UN resolutions regarding the allocation of territories and the time frame.(July 14, 1948) This was naturally objected to by the

\textsuperscript{27} Out of the 11 Members Australia abstained and India Iran and Yugoslavia proposed a federal set-up in Palestine consisting of an Arab state and a Jewish state with Jerusalem as it capital. Source: The UN Year Book 1947-48, pp.230-31. Text of the Resolution, pp. 247-56.

neighbouring Arab states and led to a full-fledged war between Israel on the one side and Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon on the other side. However, the war came to an end to the advantage of Israel, with the conclusion of various Armistice Agreements with Egypt (24 February), Lebanon (25 March), Jordan (3 April) and Syria (20 July 1949). The agreements acknowledged the acquisition of additional territories by Israel. The Jews thus fulfilled their dream for a homeland with more territories than expected while the dream of the Arabs for an independent Palestine state remained unfulfilled.

The loss of the UN proposed territories for the Palestine for a homeland created a refugee problem for surrounding Arab states. It also contributed to the growth of militant groups for the liberation of Palestine. Initially this resulted in frequent clashes between Israel and various militant Palestine liberation groups. Finally, it led to wider conflicts between Israel and the Arab countries. The financial and military aid given by the US and other Western Countries helped Israel to face the Arab armies, and occupy more Arab lands in the 1967 June war. After 1967 Israel stuck stubbornly to the newly acquired territories and refused to withdraw from the Arab lands despite the UN Resolution 242 of November 22, 1967. Israel's intrasignence, the inability of the UN to implement its own resolution and the active support of the United States for Israel, finally led to

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29 UN Security Council Resolution 242 - Appendix B.
another war in 1973 October. In the War, the Arab countries used oil as a diplomatic weapon. This inevitably created a world wide energy crisis.

Contrary to the expectations, the Arabs could not liberate the occupied territories or register a convincing victory over Israel. This 'invincible' position naturally added to Israel's bargaining strength and the Arabs had to acknowledge the existence of Israel as an independent state. Israel's success in these wars further strengthened the position of the hard-liners within the country for using military means rather than diplomatic channels to solve the long-standing disputes. However, the 1973 October war and the subsequent oil crisis internationalized the Palestine issue and highlighted a sense of urgency for solving the decades old problem by peaceful means.

1.4 Japan-Middle East Relations under the shadow of the Arab-Israeli Conflicts

In the post-war international relations, the policies towards Israel and the Palestine issue constitute an integral part of the Middle East policy of every independent country. The demand for a homeland for the Palestine Arabs, the Jewish response to the issue, the measures to be taken for the settlement of the issue and to maintain peace and security in the region etc influence this policy. Considering the delicate strategic position and the growing economic importance of
the Middle East no major country could overlook the region or ignore the issues affecting the region's political and economic security. Japan was not an exception. But Japan's late entry into world politics due to the Allied occupation and its initial inward-looking foreign policy prevented Japan from any meaningful relations with the Middle East region in the 1950's and early 60's. Meanwhile, the opposition of Arabs to the creation of Israel and the subsequent Arab-Israeli conflicts and the Palestine refugee problem were seriously affecting world peace in general and the region's security and economic development in particular. The involvement of the US in the creation of Israel and its full support for Israel's political and economic survival through financial and military aid bound the two together in close ties. The corresponding Soviet support to Arab countries like Egypt and Syria and Palestinian radical groups brought the Middle East region into the world arena.

Since the Palestine issue got embroiled in the cold-war politics between the U.S and the USSR, it naturally put Japan in a delicate predicament. Japan's security alliance with the United States, and the economic help it received from the US to develop its economy naturally prevented Japan from charting any independent policy towards the Middle East.
I.5 Japan and Israel

Israel was a new political entity and was the creation of the post-war dispensation. Japan was under the Allied Occupation when the state of Israel was born in May 1948. It was not a member of the UN and was nowhere in the picture when the UN Resolution proposing the division of Palestine was under consideration. As such it was not a party to the creation of Israel. It had also no political interest in the matter, as there was no Jewish population in Japan that needed to be settled unlike in some western countries. Given its close links with and influence on the US in the post-war period, Japan's recognition of Israel was quite natural and was on expected lines. It was "the first Middle East State with which Japan established diplomatic relations"30. But, by restoring its relations with other Middle East countries like Egypt, Iran and Turkey, Japan tried to maintain good relations with them. It was also gave the message that it recognized all the independent countries of the region and treated them on equal footing. Even though Japan officially started its relations with Israel by permitting it to setup a legation in Tokyo in December 1952, Japan took three years to open its legation in Tel

Aviv. This legation was upgraded to the Embassy level only after 10 years\textsuperscript{31}.

It is an indisputable fact that Japan's special relations with the United States and the U.S. interest in strengthening Israel, had a direct bearing on the making of Japan's policy towards the Middle East region. But, during the 1950s and early 60s, except maintaining its diplomatic relations with Israel, Japan's political or economic relations were not visibly strong. As far as economic relations were concerned, Tokyo might have considered that, being a newly created small country and at war with its neighbours, Israel's economic potential was not attractive enough for Japan's economic development. Japan's trade with Israel was less than 2\% of its total world trade\textsuperscript{32}.

On the political front, however, Japan was doing a balancing act particularly in the case of Arab-Israeli issues. Japan realized that being a country devoid of natural resources, it needed the support of other countries for its economic survival. The Arab region with enough oil reserves could not be ignored. Therefore, it was important to examine how Japan was able to keep its relations with the Arab Middle East countries with whom it had more economic stakes, while

\textsuperscript{31} Raquel Shaoul - Japanese Policy in the Middle East - part on Japan and Israel, Japan, Palestine, and the Middle East, Palestine Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) Jerusalem Seminar, 1999, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{32} Source: Middle East Economic Digest, 5 December 1975.
supporting United States actions favouring Israel. The voting pattern in the United Nations on various issues related to Israel, Palestine issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict showed how Japan used its diplomacy, mainly in favour of US-Israel interest without inviting Arab attention till the 1967 war.

I.6 The 1967 War and Japan

The 1967 Arab-Israeli war was an epoch-making event in the history of both the Israelis and the Arabs. The small state of Israel defeated the combined Arab armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan in a war that lasted just for six days. Israel occupied more Arab lands and kept them under it to strengthen its bargaining power with the Arabs. Following the war, along with the Palestine issue, the occupied Arab territories also invited world attention. The issues naturally came in for the deliberation at the United Nations. The Arab League called for world support not only to demand the Israeli withdrawal but also for the settlement of the Palestine issue. Unlike in the past this time Japan was not in a position to simply follow the U.S. position on the issue. It feared that Israel's continued occupation of Arab-land might lead to another war with active support of the super powers under the prevailing cold war conditions. Such a war would not only disrupt the world peace but also interrupt the flow of Arab oil to Japan, particularly at a time when it was making impressive progress in its industrial sector. Japan's worry was evident in a statement issued in
June 1967. A spokesman for the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) said: “if the oil supply from the Middle East is suspended, the result will be confusion in the daily life of the entire nation”\textsuperscript{33}. Above all, being the chairperson of the Security Council, Japan naturally felt that it was its duty to ensure a consensus on the issue. It worked for the endorsement of the UN Resolution 242, calling for Israel’s withdrawal from the occupied Arab land in the 1967 war. This time Japan had a special interest in getting a UN Resolution calling for the withdrawal of the occupied territories, passed with the active support of the Soviet Union. The Foreign Minister of Japan, Takaéo Miki felt that such a resolution would go a long way in their demands for the Russian withdrawal from the Kurile Islands\textsuperscript{34}. In the present Middle East politics, Russia had to support the resolution as it called itself a supporter of the Arabs. The United States also supported the resolution, as its wording was favourable to Israel. The resolution called for the “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflicts, and “for respect and acknowledgement of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the area and their right to live in peace


\textsuperscript{34} Japan Times expressed this view when it said: “There is for sure justification for Japan to join in the demands for the return of Arab territory seized by Israel in the 1967 war. In our own experience, it was the basis for the reversion of Okinawa and it is the ground on which Japan is seeking the return of the Northern territories from the Soviet Union”, Japan Times Weekly, December 1, 1973.
within the secure and recognized boundaries"\textsuperscript{35}. The resolution was kept deliberately ambiguous about whether all occupied territories were to be vacated.

As far as Japan's relations with Israel were concerned, Japan's endorsement of the resolution 242, may be seen as a departure from its previous stand simply supporting the American policies aimed at helping the Israelis. But this change was necessitated by various factors. Israel's annexation of more Arab territories and its continued occupation had led to further worsening of Middle East situation. As it would pose a serious threat to the world peace, international opinion was turning against Israel. As an independent and economically upcoming country, Japan did not want to go against the world opinion. Since the Middle East oil was more essential for its industrialization than before, it was not in a position to face any disruption of the oil supply due to any further conflict in the region. Thus, politically and economically, the support to the resolution was a necessity. But Japan's over-enthusiasm in compensating the victims of the Tel Aviv incident neutralized Japan's projected pro-Arab stand in getting the Israeli occupied territories vacated. The incident which resulted in the killing of 26 people and wounding about 70 at the Tel Aviv airport in May 1972 was the handiwork of three members of the Japan Red Army having links with Palestine liberation groups. Tokyo

\textsuperscript{35} UN Resolution 242, see Appendix – B.
announced a compensation of US $70,000 to the families of the victims despite the fact that the Japanese Red Army was the enemy of the Japanese Government and it had no moral responsibility for this incident\textsuperscript{36}.

The Arabs viewed this as an unwarranted act and considered it as a pro-US-Israeli action. Then, Japan tried to please the Arabs by voting in favour of the UN Assembly Resolution 2628, which maintained that peace in the Middle East could only be achieved if the Palestine rights were recognized. But this resolution was not only harmless, but was non-enforceable\textsuperscript{37}. In short, Japan's relations with Israel were warm but not strong enough to call it as an ally.

1.7 Japan and the Arab World

The Arab world, mainly comprising of the Arab-speaking countries of the Middle East region was not much of an economic or political force till the early 1970s. Most of the countries of this region had been under the colonial rule before the Second World War. After the war, the region became a playground for the super power rivalry and cold war politics. The creation of a Jewish state in 1948 and the denial of a homeland for Palestinians made this area an arena of constant conflicts between the Jews and the Arabs. Hence, when

\textsuperscript{36} Kunio Katakura & Motoko Katakura – Japan and The Middle East, the Middle East Institute of Japan, Tokyo, 1991, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{37} Passed at the 25\textsuperscript{th} UN General Assembly on November 4, 1970.
Japan reemerged as an independent nation in 1952, the impression it
got about the Arab world was not at all rosy. It was politically unstable
and economically and technologically backward. In the Cold War
rivalry that exerted a great influence on the region, the US had an
upper hand. Considering its economic position which was still not
very strong, Japan thought it fit to pursue a passive policy towards
the region. But as an ally of the US, Japan also found it necessary
and perhaps safe to support American policies in the region.

Japan began its political relations with the Arab world, with the
restoration of its diplomatic relations with Egypt and Turkey in 1952.
This was to neutralize its recognition of Israel, and to maintain its
neutral posture in the early years. The Suez crisis of 1956, which
occurred when Egyptian President Gamal Adul Nasser declared the
nationalisation of the Suez Canal in July 1956, was the first major
event in the region after Japan entered the world political scene. When
Japan was called upon by the Arab League to take a positive stand in
the 1956 war followed by the nationalisation, Tokyo responded very
coolly to their request. It issued a harmless statement that the crisis
should be settled according to the UN charter and international law
although it was not a member of the United Nations (Japan joined the
UN on December 18, 1956)\textsuperscript{38}. Japan termed its relations with the Arab

\textsuperscript{38} Michitoshi Takahashi - \textit{Japan's Relations with the Middle East and Africa} - in
Morinosuke Kajima (ed) - Institute of International Peace, published by
Japan Times Ltd, Tokyo, 1976, p. 179.
world as commercial rather than political. This was spelt out officially in their Diplomatic Blue Book of 1957, that "Japan's regional interests were economic rather than political or humanitarian: it is desirable that peace be maintained in this area in order for commercial relations between Japan and the Middle East to make smooth progress"\textsuperscript{39}.

During the early 1960's, the Arab world witnessed the growth of various militant organizations for the liberation of Palestine such as the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964 and numerous commando organizations, proclaiming that "armed struggle is the only way to liberate Palestine". But Japan did not worry much about the serious political issues, which were to disturb peace in the region. For instance, in 1964, Kuwait Foreign Minister Al-Sabah, representing the Arab League, met the Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda and Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira with a view to explaining the Arab position in the Arab Israeli conflict. But he was given a very cold reception by the Japanese leaders. Later, the Kuwait Minister refused to sign a joint communique as a protest against the discourtesy shown to him. This incident clearly showed how Japan treated Arab–Israeli tension with no serious concern in the initial years\textsuperscript{40}. The growth of militant Palestine liberation organization led to occasional conflicts with the

\textsuperscript{39} Diplomatic Blue Book of 1957, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Japan, Tokyo.

Israelis and Palestinians. It finally led to a full-fledged war between Israel and frontline Arab states in June 1967. Within six-days the Israel army captured the Golan Heights from Syria, Sinai and Gaza strip from Egypt and the old city of Jerusalem and West Bank from Jordan. This development dramatically changed the nature of Israel-Palestine tangle as well as the Middle East politics. After this, the issue of homeland of the Palestinians got submerged with the bigger issue of the occupation of Arab territories by Israel. Like many other countries, Japan was also forced to take a stand on the Israeli occupation of the Arab land. Then another test in the relations between Japan and the Arab world came in the form of the United Nations Resolution calling for the withdrawal of Arab-territories. During this period (October 1967) Japan was a non-Permanent Member of the Security Council with its representative, Ambassador Senjin Tsuruoka, in the presidency of the Council. The Security Council debate continued into November 1967 and Lord Caradon of the United Kingdom took over the presidency from Ambassador Tsuruoka41. This time, Japan was in a dilemma whether to support the American policies intended to help the Israelis or to show the world that its policy towards the Middle East was independent from American influence. Japan's growing economic prosperity, its emerging international role being the chairperson of the Security

Council and the awareness of its dependence on Middle East for its energy resources, greatly influenced its policy. Japan, while ignoring the Arab League's call for total withdrawal of the Arab territories (including Israel occupied Palestine territories), endorsed the UN Resolution 242 which called for Israel's withdrawal from occupied Arab land in the 1967 war.

1.8 Japan's growing dependence on Middle East oil

Japan's dependence on the Middle East oil started in the early 1960's when its economy began to grow with rapid industrialization programme. In the early 50's when Japan began its economic reconstruction, the main source of energy was coal. 80% of its energy needs was met by the indigenously available coal reserves and hydroelectricity only 6.2% was shared by the imported oil. Since Japan's coal reserve was 0.3% of the world total against its oil deposit of a negligible 0.005%, it initially tried to boost the coal production. But when the industrialization programme proceeded at faster pace, its locally available coal became insufficient and even the large-scale import of coal from the USA, Australia and Soviet Union could not meet its increasing energy needs.


43 Statistical Hand Book of Japan. (Bureau of Statistics, Office of the Prime Minister), 1975, p. 46.
Meanwhile, the discovery of more and more oil wells in the Middle East and elsewhere and the success of western oil companies in getting the oil produced and processed in huge quantity contributed to an oil boom in the world energy scene. At the same time, technological advancement in the shipbuilding industries provided further impetus to the oil companies for its transportation even to distance places through huge oil tankers. The availability of oil with less cost and in abundant quantity naturally attracted Japan as it was facing serious shortages in its energy requirements. The increase in the cost of coal production due to difficult physical conditions of coal mining in Japan also forced Japan to look out for alternative energy resources like oil. This led to a shift in Japan's energy base from coal to oil through the Ministry of Trade and Industries (MITI) Petroleum Industry Law of 1962. The free market economy initiated by the United States and the establishment of International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Tariffs Trade (GATT) provided Japan with very favourable international trade conditions of easy access to natural resources like oil and its imports.

As a result, along with the growth of Japanese economy and industries, its oil import also steadily increased. By 1965, Japan became the third largest oil-consuming nation after the United States.

and the Soviet Union. It also became the most-important oil-importer after Britain. As the Middle East oil was cheap and availability in plenty. Japan imported 89% of Crude oil from the Middle East in countries, 1965 (See Table 1.A). By the early 1970s, Japan’s oil import reached as high as 80%, and Japan ranked the largest importer of Middle East oil. During this period, market manipulation and control by the industrialized countries kept the price of oil within reasonable limits. In fact, the price dropped from $2.30 per barrel in 1960 to $1.90 in 1965 and 1.80 in 197045.

The growing dependence on Middle East oil, however, did not seriously worry Japan, since its total requirement of oil was ensured by the Western oil companies known as oil majors. The political and economic conditions were also favourable to the oil companies. During this period, Japan was not facing any oil shortage. Therefore, Japan did not show any alarm at the formation of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 196046 and Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in 196847. Its interest was limited only to avoid the escalation of the Arab-Israeli conflict to safeguard the easy flow of oil to Japan. At the same time, Japan was

46 OPEC was established in September 1960 with 12 members – Abu Dhabi, Algeria, Ecuador, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Quatar, Saudi Arabia and Venuzela.
47 OAPEC was formed in January 1968, with Abu Dhabi, Algeria, Baharain, Egypt, Iraq Kuwait Libya, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Syria as members.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Origins of Japan's Crude Oil Imports (Thousands of Barrels Per Days)</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1965</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>1970</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>110</td>
<td></td>
<td>292</td>
<td></td>
<td>490</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
<td>326</td>
<td></td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>43.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>156</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>218</td>
<td></td>
<td>356</td>
<td></td>
<td>287</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Zone</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td>248</td>
<td></td>
<td>349</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oman</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>97</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle East (total)</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>80.1</td>
<td>1338</td>
<td>89.0</td>
<td>2859</td>
<td>84.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
<td>445</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Malaysia</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pacific Basin (total)</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>13.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (total)</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1503</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>3375</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Data for 1960- Petroleum Association of Japan.
somewhat keen to diversity its oil sources and it tried to shift its oil import from the Arab countries to a non-Arab Muslim country, Iran, by increasing the oil import considerably. By 1970, nearly 45% of Japan’s oil import from Middle East came from Iran⁴⁸. Perhaps the Shah of Iran’s friendly relations with the United States, Iran’s non-Arab status and its non-involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflicts may have also influenced Japan. But it failed to properly notice the region’s growing economic freedom and prosperity through the export of oil, and rise of Arab nationalism. These factors enhanced the presence of Arab countries and gave them greater assertiveness in the international field and these virtually led to the October war of 1973 and the subsequent oil crisis.

Thus, Japan’s foreign policy before 1973, particularly with the Middle East region was based on the principle of separation of economics from politics (Seikei Bunri) which avoided active participation in any controversial political issues and instead kept its economic interests unaffected. But, by advocating such a policy, Japan was cleverly avoiding contentious political issues such as the Arab-Israeli dispute and the Palestine issue. Since such a policy was indirectly helping the American political designs in the region, Japan faced the criticism that its foreign

⁴⁸ See Table I. A.
policy was tutored by the United States. However, the post-1973 developments with regard to its relations with the Middle East confirm that should its economic interests were threatened, Japan could chart out an independent foreign policy without at the same time imposing US interests.