

**THE UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARDS
LIBYA, 1969-1988**

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SHAILJA BHARGAVA

**CENTRE FOR AMERICAN & WEST EUROPEAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067
1991**



CENTRE FOR AMERICAN & WEST EUROPEAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "The United States Policy Towards Libya, 1969-1988" by Miss Shailja Bhargava in partial fulfilment for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other University. To the best of our knowledge this is a bonafide work.

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

BK Shrivastava
SUPERVISOR

[Signature]
CHAIRPERSON
CENTRE FOR AMERICAN & WEST EUROPEAN
STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
PREFACE	i - 11
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1 - 22
CHAPTER II CAUTIOUS RAPPROCHEMENT	23 - 57
CHAPTER III GROWING DISSATISFACTION	58 - 91
CHAPTER IV CONFRONTATION	92 - 140
CONCLUSION	141 - 149
BIBLIOGRAPHY	150 - 167

PREFACE

PREFACE

This dissertation is an attempt to study the United States policy towards Libya during 1969-1988. The overthrow of the monarchy by Muammar-el-Qadhafi in 1969 was a serious setback to the United States. Relations remained strained between the United States and Libya under the Nixon and Ford administrations. The advent of Jimmy Carter, however, raised hopes that a new chapter would begin in U.S.-Libyan relations. But soon the Carter administration accused Libya of encouraging international terrorism and relations deteriorated. With the inauguration of the Reagan administration in early 1981 U.S.-Libyan ties reached a nadir, basically due to the new Administration's concerted efforts to isolate Libya. It saw the Libyan regime as a great hindrance to U.S. interests in the area. Libya's international misconduct was one of the factors that strained American relations with that country during the Reagan period. The United States saw this conduct as support for terrorists whose aim was to destabilize some of the friendly Arab regimes in the Middle East.

Chapter one gives a brief background of the United States relations with King Idris of Libya before 1969 and the causes that led to the revolution. Chapter two focusses on President Nixon's policies towards the new regime of Libya. Chapter three deals with the changes in policy towards Libya that came during the Carter administration, due to Libya's support to terrorist activities. Chapter four gives an account of diplomatic, economic and military measures adopted by the Reagan administration to curb Libya's terrorist activities.

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Shailja Bhargava
SHAILJA BHARGAVA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States has profound and varied interest in North Africa ranging from investment, trade, political, security, to strategic concerns. North Africa plays a significant role in international politics; international organizations and multilateral meetings. It provides growing scope for trade and economic cooperation with the United States, which needs to buy north African raw materials. On its part north Africa requires capital investment, new technology, managerial skills, and markets for its economic development.

The region possesses important natural resource in oil, on which the United States industrial economy is dependent. North African countries are an important source of supply of oil. These North African countries - Algeria, Egypt, Libya and Morocco - are strategically located. They have deep water ports, good airfields, and control major sea routes and air corridors. The oil tankers routes from the Persian Gulf to Europe and North America pass through African waters. Thus, strategic cooperation with these countries is important for the exercise of U.S. global responsibilities. The United States main objectives in this North African region are : first, to maintain permanent access to oil

sources i.e. mainly Arab sources; the Middle Eastern oil is still considered as the main source of imports for the United States and continues to be a profitable source of investment for U.S. corporations; second, to protect and preserve the security of Israel from Arab countries; and third, to minimize the influence and presence of the Soviet Union in this region, as it is viewed as a threat to American objectives in the region. To attain all the above mentioned objectives, the United States needs to preserve and expand its influence in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, and Morocco. It requires friendly regimes in all these countries.¹

Libya has a particularly important strategic position on the continent of Africa. It is a link between Africa and Europe and is the natural trading route between the two continents. Tripoli and Benghazi, its two cities, are the closest all year harbours for countries like Mali, Niger and Chad in their trade with Europe.

Libya is located in the centre of North Africa and has 1900 km. Mediterranean coastline. It extends

1 Henry S. Villard, Libya: The New Arab Kingdom of North Africa, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956), p.8.

through a vast territory from the central Mediterranean coast of North Africa to the highlands of North Central Africa. In the north, Libya is surrounded by the Mediterranean Sea, in the east by Egypt and to the south by Chad, Niger and Sudan, and in the west by Algeria. With an area of 680,000 sq. miles, Libya is both the fourth largest state in Africa and the fourth largest in the Arab world.² Cyrenaica, Fezzan, Sirte Desert and Tripolitania are the main geographical areas of Libya. The major cities are: Al-Bayda, Benghazi, Darnah and Tripoli is the capital of Libya. The total population in 1991 is estimated to be 4,337,000 and Arabic is the official language. Islam is the official religion of Libya.³ Due to Libya's strategic important location it is an important/country for the United States in the region. The latter could easily achieve its objectives in the region if it could have a friendly regime in Libya, which was a major source of oil, a pro-Western regime and the United States could protect Israel from its bases built in the country.

2 Worldmark Encyclopaedia of the Nations, Africa,
(New York: Worldmark Press Ltd., 1984), p. 165.

3 Ibid.

Relations Before The Revolution:

Libya has had a long and varied history. Tripoli, the capital of Libya has a triumphal arch of Emperor Marcus Aurelius. It was dominated by the Vandals in the fifth century A.D., by the Byzantines in the sixth century and was conquered by the Arabs in the eighth century A.D. From the mid sixteenth century until 1911, Libya was ruled by the Turks.⁴ In September 1911, Italians invaded Libya, meeting fierce resistance from both Turks and Libyans. A Peace Treaty on 17 October 1912 between Turkey and Italy placed Libya formally under the Italian rule, but the Libyans continued their resistance. Led by a Muslim religious brotherhood, the Sanusi, the Libyans fought the Italians to a standstill during World War I.⁵

Following the war, and particularly after the accession of Benite Mussolini to power in Italy, the Italians continued their often brutal efforts to conquer Libya. In 1931, "Umar al-Mukhtar", a leader of the Sanusi, was captured and executed, and in 1932 the Italians conquest was completed.⁶

4 New York Times, 2 September 1969, p.3.

5 William C. Askew, Europe and Italy's Acquisition of Libya, 1911-12, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942), p.10.

6 Ibid.

In World War II, Libya became one of the main battleground for Allied and Axis forces, until it was occupied by British and the French Troops. With the defeat of Italy, in the war, the north western province of Tripolitania and the eastern region of Cyrenaica were put under British administration, and the south-western Fezzan province under the French.⁷

The Treaty of 1947, between Italy and the Allies ended Italian rule in Libya and, when the Allies could not decided upon the country's future, Libya's fate was left to the United Nations.

On 21 November 1949, the UN General Assembly voted that Libya should become an independent state. On December 24, 1951, Libya gained independence, with Muhammed Idris al-Mahdi al-Sanusi as the King.⁸ Under the 1951 constitution of Libya, a federal system and a hereditary monarchy with a federal state divided into three provinces, Cyrenaica, Fezzan, Tripolitania was established. The king was considered the head of the

7 Claudine Segre, The Fourth Shore: The Italian Colonization of Libya, (Chicago: University Chicago Press, 1975), p.8.

8 Nina Epton, Oasis Kingdom: The Libyan Story, (London: Jarrolds, 1952), p.16.

State, and he exercised his power through his ministers.⁹

The first foreign policy move was made by King Idris in 1953, when Libya turned to the United States for major negotiations. The first agreement was signed between Libya and the United States on 9th September 1954. According to the agreement the United States was entitled to retain the air base at Wheelus Field, just outside Tripoli, and at Al-Watiyah up to the end of 1970. The Treaty was terminated on the 24th December, 1970. In return, the United States had to pay \$ 42 million in various forms of aid during the 16 years period covered by the agreement, and to deliver \$ 3 million worth of grain for drought relief. The agreement formalised the role of Wheelus Field as a link in the chain of U.S. bases built up round the Sino-Soviet bloc in early years of the Cold War. Wheelus base was also used as a Military Air Transport Service staging post with the Al-Watiyah base as the bombing range in western Tripolitania and also it was a training centre for U.S. aircrews based in Western Europe. For Libya, Wheelus base was, in fact, the country's largest single source

9 Roy Behnke, Jr., The Herders of Cyrenaica, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), p.11.

of regular income and the largest single employer of Libyan labour.¹⁰

In the early 1950s Libya's strategic position was the major attraction for which the United States was prepared to give large amount of money for its development. Also, at that time Libya desperately needed financial aid for its development and was unable to defend itself.

Libya's strategic importance was emphasized in the Draper Committee report which was submitted to President Eisenhower in 1959. The report stated:

The West, should it lose completely its strategic position in North Africa, would find its control over the Mediterranean seriously threatened. North Africa, moreover, flanks the routes which the Soviets would follow in their efforts to penetrate Africa. Libya serves as a buffer between the Middle East and the Maghreb and at least partially shields the latter from the full force of Arab nationalism. So long as Libya remains friendly to the West, the West can control the Southern Shore and part of the East Mediterranean. (11)

10 Henry Habib, Libya, Past and Present, (Malta: Interprint Ltd., 1979), p.72.

11 Quoted in Mahmoud G. Elwarfally, Imagery and Ideology in U.S. Policy Toward Libya, 1969-1982, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988), p. 183.

The report recommended Libya as one of the countries in which the United States should prepare the military officers' corps to be future leaders for the country. A CIA study made during the same time had confirmed "the effectiveness of using military assistance for these purposes".¹² Both reports were consistent with and supportive of the joint chiefs' report in 1959 which stated:

The best interests of the United States will be served by taking steps to ensure the continuation of a political atmosphere in the Libyan government which will be amenable to the continuance of the present base rights agreements. The U.S. should encourage the orientation of the Libyan government toward the West, and away from Egyptian and Soviet influence. (13)

In March 1957, the United States started a economic and military aid programme intended to stop the rising communist influence in the North Africa. The programme provided annual increase of \$ 7 million in American economic aid and the promise of American arms to Libya.

12 Ibid.

13 Jeff McConnell, "Libya: Propaganda and Covert Operations", Counterspy, November 1981
-January 1982, p.25, Quoted in ibid.

In April 1958, the United States agreed to pay \$ 5.5 million to the Libyan Public Development and Stabilisation Agency for five years. In 1960, American aid was increased to \$ 10 million because, after the start of large scale oil prospecting in 1955, Libya had become "a property of potential economic value" to the United States. This increase in United States aid was intended to support a pro-Western regime.¹⁴

American relations with Libya became good after the discovery of oil in 1959 by an American Oil company ESSO at Zelten, in Cyrenaica area in Libya. The large deposits of oil attracted many other American oil companies like, Amerada Hess, Bunker Hunt, Continental (Conco), and Marathon, to start their operations in early 1960s. By 1968, Libya was the most profitable source for U.S. oil companies. In that year American oil companies total investment was \$ 15 00 million, and produced 88 per cent of the country's oil in 1968. By 1969, the United States had total domination over the oil industry in Libya, with twenty American companies operating and producing Libyan oil.

14 Majid Khadduri, Modern Libya : A Study in Political Development, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1963), p.24.

Among them were American Overseas, Atlantic Richfield, Continental, Hispanoil, Texaco and Socal. The growth of the oil industry brought Libya into close economic relations with the United States.¹⁵

The 1969 Revolution:

A revolution does not occur in a vacuum. There must be appropriate and enough conditions and causes to bring about a revolution. A revolution is different from a coup. It affects the whole nation, and if the people do not support it, then it can not succeed. The 1969 Revolution was truly a people's revolution, supported by the army, and led and organised by a group of young army officers who acted for the people.

When Libya became independent in December 1951, the Libyans were most conscious of this independence, because it was after a long struggle against colonialism. But they realized very quickly that the King had subordinated Libya to the United States.

15

John Blair, The Control of Oil, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1976), p.10.

The latter, through its power and the military base it had established on Libyan territory continued to exercise tremendous influence in Libya. This was a matter of constant irritation for the Libyans.

The first Libyan reaction came in 1956 during the Anglo-French Israeli war against Egypt. When the British used its bases in Libya to attack Egypt. As the national feeling was driving the Libyans they could not tolerate the use of their bases to attack another Arab state.

In January, 1964, masses of Libya demanded by violent demonstrations that their government support the decision of the Arab League on foreign bases. They asked for the full evacuation of foreign bases, and military assistance to those Arab states fighting Israel and the use of petroleum as a weapon in the battle against Israel.

The Government of King ' Idris finally announced in August 1964 that the U.S. and the U.K. had agreed in principle to evacuate their bases. Students had been killed earlier in the year over this issue. The demands of people were clear, and they were being frustrated by a Government that placed Arab priorities in a secondary position.

The defeat of Arabs in the June 1967 war (Arab-Israel) made Libyan people more anti-government. This was one of the major causes which ushered in of the 1969 revolution.

The question of foreign bases continued to preoccupy Libyan opinion. Nothing further had happened since 1964, and American and British bases were still in full operation. In fact, the American base of Wheelus, the largest American base outside the United States, was used very much in the June 1967 war. It was believed in Libya that the Wheelus base was used by the Americans to assist Israel during the Arab-Israel war of 1967. The Libyans were enraged by the indirect support extended by their government to Israel to please the Americans but they had no way to express themselves except through demonstrations, strikes and boycotts. Army support could not yet manifest itself, although few incidents occurred in 1967 when individual members of the Libyan armed forces acted on Egypt's behalf. But the government crushed the demands of the Libyan masses by force.¹⁶

16

Ruth First, Libya: The Elusive Revolution, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 20-41.

On June 8, 1967, Hussein al-Khadayki, crossed with two divisions into Egypt. Other Libyan units were ordered to intercept them, but the effort failed. Hussein al-Khadayki reached Cairo on June 10, 1967, and participated in the war against Israel. Many Libyans wanted to volunteer but they were not allowed, so they remained in Egypt until the revolution. However, these Libyan soldiers were kept in touch with the Libyans Free Unionist Officers who were secretly planning the revolution.

The regime of King Idris created no workable political system, nor anything like a political ideology. The king did not even attempt to create a party system through which he could rule the country. He also excluded the majority of the people from any kind of participation. Poverty, injustice, illiteracy were some of the domestic causes which contributed to the revolution. The people lacked hospitals, schools, highways, electricity, water and arms to defend themselves. The money of the people, was spent on royal palaces, medical treatment for the ruling classes outside Libya, while the Libyan people could not be treated abroad or elsewhere. Oil production was completely in the hands

and in the interest of Western powers. Most of the wealth from Libya's oil wells went to few people. There was also a complete lack of interest in the other industries of the nation. For example, people working in agriculture dropped from 63 per cent in 1960 to 37 per cent in 1967. Prices were raised and imports of foreign goods increased from \$ 31 million in 1953 to \$ 645 million in 1968. All these conditions accelerated the move towards bringing a revolution in Libya by the Army Officers.

The Libyan army officers supporting the revolution were organised by the Free Unitary Officers. In 1964, Muammer al-Qadhafi and his colleagues, Abdul Salam Jalloud, Mustapha al-Kharubi, Imhammad al-Mukaraif, Abdul Fatah Younes, decided to reorganise the whole revolutionary movement. It was divided into a military section and a civilian section. The plans were made in the military section. The Army section established a Central Committee which directed all revolutionary activities.

The Free Officers were greatly influenced by the Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser, whom they considered as the leader of all Arab revolutionists.

The Free Officers believed that the objectives should be one of the Arab revolution, and were opposed to its various views, like the Algerian Liberation Movement, the Baath, the Arab Socialist Union, and the populism of the People's Republic of South Yemen. The Free Officers believed that all these were experiments that must unite and end the ideological difference which these western countries could exploit, especially when the nations are divided and weak.¹⁷

There were no organizational links with civilians, because for the reasons of secrecy and security. In 1964, the actual planning of the revolution began as a slow and careful process. Two years later, forty Free Officers were sent to the United Kingdom for training. On August 13, 1969, a convention of the army officers was held in Benghazi by the Free Officers and 1 September was set as the zero hour.

On the appointed day, the Free Officers seized power in Libya. The revolution was headed by Qadhafi. They ousted King Idris and declared that the oil rich North African nation had become the Libyan Arab Republic.

17 John K. Cooley, Libyan Sandstorm: The Complete Account of Qadhafi's Revolution, (New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1982), pp. 32-55.

The Free Officers adopted the Arab nationalist slogan of "Socialism, Unity and Freedom" for Libya. Rebellious troops executed the coup by moving into Tripoli in the early morning hours and securing the government and military installations. The army also moved in Sebha, Benghazi, Tobruk and the whole country came under the control of the Free Officers without any bloodshed. In fact, there was no opposition to the revolution, instead there was a lot of support by the people.

The new regime dissolved the parliament on September 1, and all other constitutional bodies, closed all airports and seaports and cut external phones and telegraph communications.

At the time of the revolution King Idris was in Turkey and King's nephew and heir Crown Prince Al-Hasan Rida as-Sanusi was governing the country. On September 7, 1969, the Crown Prince renounced all rights to the throne and gave his support to the revolution.

In his first policy statement on September 2, the new regime declared that it would follow an Arab nationalist policy and would seek to cooperate with nonaligned nations. It promised to respect existing

agreements with other nations and to protect the lives of and property of foreigners.

The United Arab Republic and Iraq were the first countries to recognize the new regime.

On September 8, 1969, a nine member government was announced under the prime-ministership of Dr. Mahmud Suleiman al-Maghrabi. The Central Committee was transformed into the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC). It was composed of 12 members with Qadhafi as Chairman. Libya was to be governed by the RCC and the cabinet.¹⁸

American Response :

The Nixon Administration recognized the new regime without much delay on 7th September 1969. A statement by Robert W. Becker, Department's spokesman on September 6, 1969, stated, "The United States Government has noted the statement of the RCC that all nations maintaining diplomatic relations with Libya are considered as recognizing the new Libyan government. The United States is maintaining diplomatic relations

with the government of Libya and looks forward to a continuation of traditionally close ties between our two countries".¹⁹

David Newsom, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs and Joseph Palmer, ambassador to Libya, played a major role in the U.S. recognition of the new regime. They convinced President Nixon that the new regime in Libya would prove to be of great importance in the struggle to keep Soviet influence and Communism out of the Arab countries.²⁰ The U.S. State Department had confirmed on September 1, that all the 10,000 U.S. citizens living in Libya were safe and that operations of the 38 U.S. oil companies were going on normally. But the operations at the Wheelus Air Force Base near Tripoli were stopped by the Revolutionary Command Council on the day it took over.²¹

A report in the New York Times explained the reason why the United States had so promptly recognised the new regime. An un-named State Department Official

19 See the Statement of Robert Becker on 6 September 1969, in Department of State Bulletin, vol.61, September 29, 1969, p. 281.

20 J. Burham, "On the Southern Flank: Military Coup," National Review, vol.21, September 23, 1969, p. 529.

21 New York Times, 2 September 1969, p.1.

told the Times: According to the State Department;

U.S. diplomatic ties with a foreign government are normally considered suspended but not necessarily broken when a recognised government is overthrown. Then if the facts warrant recognition can be extended to the successor, regime without formalities. In the case of the new ruling regime in Libya, concern over private American oil investments, totaling \$ 1 billion, and over the future of the Wheelus base was apparently a determining factor in the Nixon Administration's decision.(22)

Signs of growing anti-Americanism since the coup were clear. The new regime suddenly changed its policy towards the United States. First, it expelled all the U.S. Peace Corp. volunteers who were teaching English in Tripoli schools. Then on 29 October 1969, it asked the United States to evacuate the Wheelus Base by 24 December 1970.

This sudden change came up because the new Libyan government's policies were based on nationalism. It believed that the United States was an imperial power that sought military, economic, and political domination over the Arab countries. And that it protected Israel, which kept the Arab countries divided, backward and

dependent. The American bases were very important to the United States. For more than a decade, the U.S. base at Wheelus had been a main training site for American bombing crews stationed in Europe. Strategic planners also had viewed, Wheelus as useful in the protection of Europe's southern countries.²³

According to a source in the Pentagon, the loss of Wheelus would have affected the deployment of operational military air craft in the Mediterranean and the Middle East. The major loss would have been the extensive training facilities at Wheelus Base.²⁴ Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, David Newsom, stressed the value of the U.S. military bases in Libya for the operations in Europe. He said ;

Wheelus Air force Base was originally used as a United States Air Force Air Transport Command field. In the early 1950s its primary mission became that of a USAF gunnery and training base. It served an important training function for U.S. Air Force NATO committed tactical air craft, Alwitia range, south of Tripoli, provided an opportunity, for every form of gunnery and bombing except nuclear, something that we could not duplicate anywhere else in that hemisphere and for that reason it was a convenience and valuable as long as we could keep it on

23 "Another Arab Country That Worries US", U.S. News World Report, vol.67, Dec.8,1969, pp.81-2.

24 New York Times, December 24, 1969, p.4.

satisfactory grounds.²⁵

After the negotiations between the two countries they agreed on that all the American forces numbering about 3,000 and equipments would be withdrawn from the Wheelus Base by June 30, 1970. The evacuation started at Wheelus on 12 December 1969.

The United States policy towards the new regime was clear in a paper prepared for the WSAG (Washington Special Actions Group) meeting which emphasized that the best choice was to try to get along with Libya:



TH-3568

Our present strategy is to seek to establish satisfactory relations with the new regime. The return to our balance of payments and the security of U.S. investments in oil are considered our primary interests. We seek to retain our military facilities, but not at the expense of threatening our economic return. We also wish to protect European dependence on Libyan oil. It is literally the only "irreplaceable" oil in the world, from the point of view both of quality and geographical location. (26)

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- 25 See the Statement before the Subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements and Commitments Abroad, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 91st Cong., 2nd Session, July 20, 1970.
- 26 Quoted in, Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), p.120.



Thus, the United States established friendly relations with the new regime of Libya because Libya was a strategically important to America and the Nixon Administration believed that a pro-American country in North Africa will help to maintain United States objectives in the region, and also protect its oil industry and 5,000 Americans living in Libya.

CHAPTER II

CAUTIOUS RAPPROCHEMENT

Only a few months before the revolution in Libya, Richard Nixon became the President of the United States. The response of the administration was cautious. Libya was not on the top of the foreign policy agenda of the administration. Its main interest was in ending the Vietnam war which was proving disastrous for the United States. It was however interested in protecting and safeguarding its interest in the Middle East. It was determined to ensure the security of Israel, stability in the region preventing the Soviet Union from increasing its influence in the Middle East and securing access to oil of the region at "reasonable price level" for the economic development of industrial world. It viewed its policies towards Libya in the context of its policy in the region. The Nixon administration was willing to accommodate to some extent the revolutionary government on bilateral issues in relationship but it was unwilling to compromise its foreign policy objectives in the region for the sake of good relations with Libya. Here an attempt will be made to analyse the conflict between America's regional interest and its interest in Libya and Nixon administration's effort to resolve this conflict.

The Random House Dictionary defines Rapprochement as the re-establishment of harmonious relations, as between

nations. In a recently published monograph on the United States foreign policy, the author defined as a policy of one state to change the character of another by favourably responding to the economical and technical needs of the target state by while delaying military and other demands.¹ The latter definition is more pertinent for this study as it was suggested in the context of United States relations with Libya. From the beginning of the seventies began to traverse the road to rapprochement with Libya. The reason why the Nixon administration adopted this policy was, because of its perception of the new revolutionary regime as anti-Soviet whose policies were directed not only against communism within the country but also in other Arab states. Even when in July 1970 the United States had received information that large quantities of Soviet arms, T-54 tanks had been unloaded at Tripoli (capital of Libya) harbour on July 18 and 19, 1970, it did not feel alarmed. David Newsom, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "these arms were meant for only parade and in no way reflected any Soviet-Libyan rapprochement".² He also

1 M.G. Elwarfally, Imagery And Ideology In U.S. Policy Toward Libya: 1969-1982 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1988), p. 86.

2 See the statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on U.S. Security Agreements Commitments Abroad, July 20, 1970, in Department of State Bulletin, vol. LXIII, 20 July 1970, p. 82.

informed the Committee that the deal had been concluded through Egypt and not directly. On May 15, 1971, when President of Egypt Anwar Sadat cracked down on the Nasserite elements in his regime, Libya stood by Sadat and offered its immediate assistance under the perception conveyed to them by Sadat that those elements were merely the Soviet agents in the Egyptian regime.³ Two months later, on July 23, 1971, Libya played a decisive role in putting down the short lived Marxist coup against Maj. Gen. Gaafer al-Nimeiri in Sudan. Libyan jets ordered a British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) plane enroute from London to Khartoum to land in Benghazi (Libya), when the coup's two leaders, named Licut. Col. Babakr al Nur Osman and Maj. Farouk Osman, were arrested and sent later to Sudan to be executed.⁴ In 1971, during the Indo-Pak war, Libya supported Pakistan in its war against India and supplied Pakistan with all the material assistance it could afford, including several American F-5 fighters. In this war the United States was backing Pakistan and therefore Libya's policy was viewed as supportive of the United States policy towards the Indian subcontinent. In the same period, Libya also supported the expulsion of Soviet military advisors from Egypt and suggested to

3 New York Times, May 16, 1971, p.2.

4 Ibid, 23 July 1971, p.1.

President Sadat the merger of their two countries for fear that the Russians might retaliate militarily or economically. All these were seen as favourable. Libya, indeed was a staunch anti-communist country at this point of time and yet it was not pro-U.S. and that led the United States to move cautiously on issues relating to Libya. On July 19, 1971, David Newsom stated before the Joint meeting of the Subcommittees on Africa and the Near East, of the House of Representatives, that "although Libya was strongly anti-communist, it was cool to the United States because it considered that American policies were opposed on Arab issues"⁵. He further stated that the "new regime under the leadership of Col. Qadhafi seeks its policies in exclusively Arab terms. It seeks closer cooperation among Arab states and sees that cooperation focused primarily on the cause of the Palestinians and the struggle with Israel".⁶ It was also increasingly interested in Sub-Saharan Africa. It expressed support for muslim population in other countries and determination to oppose what it regarded as Israel's influence detrimental to Arab cause in Africa.

5 See the statement before a Joint Hearing of the Subcommittee on Africa and the Near East, Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, July 19, 1971, in Department of State Bulletin, vol. LXV, August 14, 1971, p. 194.

6 Ibid.

There were two issues which were primarily in the realm of bilateral relations. Libya wanted more revenue and more participation in the production of its basic resource, which is petroleum. U.S. oil companies in Libya produced 90 per cent of its petroleum under severe pressure. The revolution brought to an end countries military relationship with the United States. The United States had withdrawn from the Wheelus air base in accordance with 1954 agreement. The United States hoped that its policies in future will strengthen its common interest with Libya. In order to prove its goodwill towards Libya the Nixon administration delivered the eight of the sixteen C-130 military transport planes purchased by the former royal regime of King Idris before 1969, the rationale which the administration provided was that it was a "commercial deal" between the earlier royal regime and the Lockheed company of the United States. But it had no desire to strengthen Libya militarily and therefore it cancelled the delivery of few F-5 military aircrafts, against the advice of the State Department which favoured the delivery. It was the U.S. Congress which did not approve the delivery because of Libya's policies towards Israel. Thus, it is clear that the United States foreign policy towards Libya was ambivalent and reflected

the internal contradiction between the two diverse elements of its policy. On the one hand it wanted to please Libya, on the other it opposed its policies which were injurious to the interest, Israel. The policy of not providing arms to Libya ran into trouble because the United States was not the only source from where the Libyans could obtain arms. On 8th January 1970, Libya announced the purchase of 110 Mirage fighter planes from France. In exchange for the aircraft, Libya had agreed to end its support of rebels in neighbouring country Chad, a former French colony. France reportedly had a force of 2,600 to 3,000 men assisting the Chad government against the insurgents.⁷ This purchase by Libya immediately became the major concern for the United States. Because as the State Department argued that "the French sales could alter the strategic balance in the Middle East against Israel. As Libya intended to give these planes to Egypt".⁸ Only a few days after the sale was announced Secretary of State, William Rogers, summoned French Ambassador Charles Lucet on 21 January 1970 and protested against the arms deal. He reiterated that the arms deal "could disturb the arms balance in the Middle East".⁹ The State Department was unhappy that France had not consulted

7 New York Times, 8 January 1970, p.6.

8 Quoted in Ibid.

9 Facts on File, vol.30, no.1526, January 28, 1970, p. 31.

the United States about the arms transaction. The only satisfaction was that the sale by France did not become operative until 1971 and that there were very few Libyan trained pilots so that these would not have been used until the pilots were trained. France rejected the American protest and pointed out that the agreement had provisions to prevent the planes to transfer them by Libya to other countries.¹⁰

That was, however, not the end of the matter. The pro-Israeli lobby pressurized the Congress that it should force the Nixon administration to do something about the arms deal. Responding to these pressures President Richard Nixon in a press conference on January 30, 1970 stated that, "the France's decision to sell 100 or more jet planes to Libya had exgravated his concern about the military build ups in the region. We are pro-peace and we are for security for all nations in that area".¹¹

Finally, France sold 100 Mirage planes to Libya on 26 December 1971.¹² Despite America's assurances to Israel, two squadrons of the very same planes were

10 Ibid.

11 New York Times, 31 January 1970, p.1.

12 Ibid, 26 December, 1971, p.9.

transferred to Egypt and took part in 1973 war. The Jewish lobby achieved some result when the administration decided that the French-Libyan arms deal injected "a new sense of urgency into the administration's consideration for Israel's request for U.S. aid".¹³

As a result, the military assistance provided by the United States to Israel was increased between 1968-1972. The United States had provided \$ 985 million worth of military assistance in 1974, this assistance went up to \$ 2482.7 million.¹⁴

Libya started developing economic and commercial links with the Soviet Union. Its Deputy Prime Minister Major Jalloud visited Moscow and signed an economical and technical agreement with the Soviet Union on March 4, 1972.¹⁵ This agreement had no military component and related to oil prospecting, mineral prospecting, exploration of gas and the development of power production. This economic and commercial link came under stress when

13 Ibid, 25 January 1972, p.2.

14 Ibid, 12 December 1974, p.4.

15 Ibid, 5 March 1972, p.6.

Libya denounced Soviet Union treaty of friendship and cooperation with Iraq. Libya stated that "such treaties represented imperialist pressures and contended that such treaties would deprive the Arabs of the chance of leadership in the Third World".¹⁶ Throughout 1973, Libya and the Soviet Union criticised each other. As a result of Soviet stand in the Arab-Israeli conflict. This bitter controversy reached its highest point in October 1973 during the Arab-Israel war.

When Egypt signed agreement with Israel on 18 January 1974, on mutual disengagement, it was a turning point in Soviet-Libyan relations. Libya considered that Egypt had come under American influence and the increase in American influence would affect the balance of power in the region. In order to contain the growing American influence Libya's policy towards the Soviet Union underwent a notable shift. It increased its contact and cooperation with the Soviet Union mainly in the field of arms. Thereby it wanted to enhance its military capability. It should be noted here that Libya's closer military relation came after its demand for supply of sophisticated

16 Roger F. Pajak, "Arms and Oil: The Soviet-Libyan Arms Supply Relationship", Middle East Review, vol.13, Winter 1980-81, p. 54.

arms was turned down by the United States and other Western countries. There is no doubt that the revolutionary leadership of Libya considered the increasing American-Israeli influence in the region as threat to its security. It believed that the presence of the United States and Israel in Egypt seriously threatened its existence. Libya had become the southern front against Israel.

In May 1974, Major Jalloud went on his first visit to the Soviet Union as the Prime Minister of Libya. He concluded a general trade and industrial cooperation agreement which included supply of Soviet arms in exchange of Libyan oil. Under the agreement Libya was to receive the Soviet made TU-22, Supersonic bombers, (with 1,400 miles range), various types of SAM missiles, tanks, and anti-tank missiles, MIG-23 "Floggers". The following year Kosygin, the Soviet Premier, visited Libya in 1975 and another arms deal was concluded between the two countries under the agreement that the Soviet Union agreed to provide another 1,000 tanks and six F-class attack submarines. The value of arms was estimated to be hefty \$ 800 million.¹⁷ By 1976, Libya had become one of

17 New York Times, 14 December 1975, p. 4.

the major military powers in the region. It had one of highest per capita ratio of military equipments in the world. However, this many items of this formidable stockpile of sophisticated weapons remained in storage because the Libyan armed forces lacked the trained manpower to maintain them and operate them. As Libya's military relationship grew with the Soviet Union during the Nixon administration, the United States became concerned. The concern grew out of the perception that if the Soviet Union became the major source of arms supply to Libya and it built bases there, then Libya will become a threat to countries friendly to the United States. This issue was made clear by Secretary of State, William P. Rogers, in his statement that:

The United States had declared its serious concern over the first Soviet arms shipments to Libya at a time of delicate peace initiatives in the Middle East and warned Soviet Union, against deeper involvement, especially at a time when diplomacy in the Middle East was in an acutely sensitive phase.(18)

Effort to Improve Relations With Libya:

in the early seventies the United States tried to develop good relations with Libya. On 11 June 1970, it

18 Quoted in Ibid, 25 July 1976, p.5.

handed over the Wheelus air base to Libya.¹⁹ In the following year Libya appointed a new ambassador Ali el-Huderi to Washington in effort to improve relations with the United States. This gave the impression that, "the Libya started to have effective and satisfactory relations with the United States".²⁰

During this period rumours circulated in Beirut and Washington that the CIA discovered three plots to overthrow the new regime and informed Libya about them. In 1971, the American ambassador Joseph Palmer got names of group of army officers by showing sympathy to them, who were plotting against the government, and then gave the names to the Libyan government.²¹ The second incident known as the 'Hilton Assignment' was also discovered by the CIA and reported to the Libyan government. A group of Libyan exiles led by Qmal Al-Shalhi (who was the former King Idris's special adviser), hired a former British member of Parliament, James Kent, to recruit a group of European mercenaries. They were to liberate Qadhafi's opponents in Tripoli prison and make an attack on his

19 Ibid, 12 June 1970, p.3.

20 Department of State Bulletin, vol.LXV, July 19, 1971, p. 28.

21 New York Times, October 4, 1971, p.2.

barracks.²²

The third plot, also was discovered by the CIA, was an attempt made by Abdullah Abid Al-Sanussi, a close relative of the former King Idris to overthrow the Libyan government in 1970. According to the plan, Chad was used as a base for smuggling weapons and mercenaries into Fezzan in Southern Libya, where tribal people could be used to control the city. From there they could move to the northern cities of Tripoli and Benghazi.²³ As a result of timely information provided by the CIA all these were frustrated and Qadhafi remained in firm control.

In November 1972, when Israel reacted very strongly to Libya's support for the guerrillas in the Lebanon and providing shelters to the survivors of the Black September group, which killed the Israeli athletes in Munich during the Olympic games in 1972.²⁴ The United State had advised Israel not to take any action against Libya. These American gestures however did not prevent the two countries relations from slipping into confrontation. In early 1973,

22 Patrick Seale & Maureen McConville, The Hilton Assignment, (London: Temple Smith, 1973), p.28.

23 E.R.F. Sheehan, "Col. Qadhafi: Libya's Mystical Revolutionary", New York Times Magazine, February 6, 1972, pp. 10-13.

24 New York Times, 30 November 1972, p.2.

Libya did not accept the appointment of American ambassador in Tripoli in place of Joseph Palmer who had resigned in late 1972. The reason for ambassador Palmer's resignation was, he was not getting access to Qadhafi. It was gradually becoming apparent that the United States search for rapprochement with Libya was stalled. The American cooperation with Libya was not reciprocated by Qadhafi. The United States realized that Qadhafi's Libya had "different objectives in the area from ours".²⁵ As a result the United States expressed its displeasure by withholding the delivery of another eight C-130 planes to Libya and decided not to sell any military weapons, and equipments "which could add significantly to Libya's military capability".²⁶

After the Libyan-Soviet rapprochement resulting in agreement in May 1974, the Nixon administration started putting pressure on Libya. On January 21, 1975, the Libyan purchase of a \$ 200 million air defense system was delayed²⁷ and in August 1975, the State Department confirmed this action and refused to permit Libyan airforce trainees to enter the United States for aircraft maintenance.²⁸

25 Ibid, 30 December, 1973, p.6.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid, 22 January 1975, p.6.

28 Department of State Bulletin, Vol.LXXIII, 22 September 1975, p. 450.

Libya's Growing Involvement In Terrorism:

Libya's revolutionary activities within other Arab countries and throughout the world did not receive any official attention at all during the period of 1969-76. These terrorist activities had started in early 1970s and were carried out in the Middle East, Europe and Africa. Libya's main aim behind these activities was to unite all Arab countries into a radical Islamic union and undermine the existing leadership of the countries such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia. The most disturbing aspects of these activities from the point of view of the United States was that they aimed, the destruction of Israel, and aimed with which the United States could never reconcile.

The support by the Libyan revolutionary regime of the revolutionary movements in the Arab world and elsewhere stems mainly from the two ideological factors. A careful scrutiny of the Libyan revolutionary activities abroad points out that both nationalistic and religious factors were motivating forces behind these activities. As the author of the book, *Libya: the Elusive Revolution*, Ruth First, writes, that Qadhafi "conceives of the Arab world as a single homogeneous whole and of the Arab people

as a single nation".²⁹ Three stumbling blocks were seen by Libya as standing in the way of the reunification of this Arab nation. First, Israel, as a political entity, keeps the Arab nation separated; consequently, the Arabs remain divided into small fragile entities as long as Israel continues to appear on the map of the Arab world. Second, U.S. "imperial" policies in the region help not only to perpetuate the existence of Israel, but also to spread its influence (militarily, economically, and politically) over other Arab regimes in the area. A third stumbling block were the "reactionary" Arab regimes who allied themselves with U.S. imperialism for the sake of survival. The rulers of those regimes, to Qadhafi, have no base of legitimacy within their countries and the only reason for their continuous existence is U.S. protection.

Thus, since the early years of the revolution, Libya had expressed its overt support and encouragement to any revolutionary movement within those "reactionary" Arab regimes. For revolution is the only way to Arab rebirth. Thus, on July 10, 1971, after an attempt to overthrow King Hassan of Morocco, Libya immediately expressed

29 Ruth First, Libya: The Elusive Revolution, (New York: Africa Publishing Co., 1974), p. 17.

its full support by placing its army on full alert and releasing statements that troops were prepared to fly to Morocco if there was any danger from reactionary forces. The coup attempt failed, and on July 22, 1971, the two countries withdrew their ambassadors.³⁰ The next month in August 1971, Qadhafi suggested to the Palestinians that they should assassinate King Hussein of Jordan.³¹ And in the same month, Chad accused Libya of financing a coup attempt against the Tombalbay regime. In retaliation, Libya openly announced its full support to the Chad National Liberation Front in September 1971.³² Two reasons lay behind this Libyan action: first, the perceived need of the Moslems in northern Chad who were seen as oppressed by the "Christian" Tombalbay regime, and second, the desire to undermine the strong Israeli influence in Chad.

Libya's concern for persecuted Muslims went further when on October 7, 1971, Qadhafi expressed his readiness to send arms to Guinea and warned the Filipino regime that Libya would take the necessary action if persecution

30 New York Times, 11 July 1971, p.2.

31 Ibid, 2 August 1971, p.4.

32 Ibid, 22 September 1971, p.2.

against Muslims in the south did not cease.³³ In the same year, Libya stood by Pakistan, militarily, in its war with India. Qadhafi's religious sympathies also were the motive behind supporting Black Muslims in the United States. At the same time, Libya's efforts in Africa to help Moslems in different countries, and to undermine the Israeli influence, were making some progress. On April 12, 1972, the Chadian regime resumed diplomatic relations with Libya and announced its support for the Palestinian fight against Israel.³⁴ In April also, Idi Amin expelled the Israeli mission from Uganda, and established diplomatic relations with Libya. This was the result of his visit to Tripoli and after he had received a Libyan promise of economic and military help.

The Libyan campaign against Israel in Africa accelerated its speed in 1972-73. During these two years, Mali, Dahomey, Burundi, Congo People's Republic, Zaire, Gabon and Togo broke diplomatic relations with Israel and declared their firm support for the Palestinian cause.

Libyan support to liberation movements in Africa was also a cardinal sign of Libya's opposition to the to the existence of all forms of racial discrimination

33 Ibid, 8 October 1971, p.7.

34 Ibid, 13 April 1972, p.3.

and colonization. In 1973, the following liberation movements were reported to have received Libyan arms and financial aid: ZAPU and ZANU (against Rhodesia), SWAPO (in Namibia), PAIGC (in Guinea-Bissau), FRELMO (in Mozambique), and MPLA (in Angola).

Aside from the Libyan support to liberation movements, it was accused of helping terrorist activities. For instance, in March 1973, Libya was alleged to have supported a guerrilla attack in Morocco for the purpose of assassinating King Hassan. On July 24, 1973, a Japanese Boeing 747 hijacked from Amsterdam landed in Benghazi (Libya) and was blown up by the hijackers after the passengers were released. Libya announced that the hijackers would be tried for their crime.³⁵ Libya was also accused of cooperating with the members of the Black September Movement, who in September 1972 killed eleven Israeli athletes at the Olympic games in Munich. Libya received the bodies of five Palestinian killed in the operation "and gave them a ceremonial funeral". Also the three Palestinians released after the hijacking of a West German airplane were received in Tripoli on 30 October 1973 and were given shelter in Libya.

35 Ibid, 25 July 1973, p.6.

Egypt accused Libya of financing acts of subversion on April 18, 1974, and of directing Libyan agents to blow up the presidential rest house at Mersa Matruh and to kill some Egyptian journalists. A bomb explosion in an Alexandria Night Club on July 27, 1974, was also blamed on Libya. President Numeiri of Sudan, claimed to have discovered a plot to overthrow his regime and that Libya was involved in the act. Such acts of subversion and countersubversion became more acute between Egypt and Libya, when the former granted asylum to the two ex-Libyan officials who were involved in a plot against Qadhafi in 1975. Another coup attempt in Sudan on July 2, 1976, provided much more proof in the eyes of President Numeiri and Sadat, of Qadhafi's intention to spread revolution in neighbouring states. They claimed that Libya spent \$ 140 million in financing the plot.³⁶

On March 21, 1976, President Bourguiba of Tunisia stated that Libya had sent a "terrorist unit" to Tunisia with orders to kill him or his prime minister. He described the alleged plot as an act of revenge for the failed attempt at unity between Tunisia and Libya in

36 Walter Laqueur, Terrorism, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolsan, 1977), pp. 48-52.

January 1974. On July 8, 1976, the Tunisian News Agency claimed that Libya was also training about 2,400 Tunisians at twenty camps in Libya operated in conjunction with Tunisian opposition leaders. On August 14, President Sadat claimed that Libya was training men "in four camps for subversive activities in Egypt, Chad, Sudan and Tunisia".³⁷ The New York Times mentioned the involvement of Libya in the following other terrorist activities which attracted the attention of the entire world.³⁸

37 Ibid.

38 (1) The terrorists who murdered members of the Israeli team at the Olympic games in Munich in 1972, had been trained in Libya, and their arms smuggled into Munich by Libyan diplomatic couriers and were later given large amount of money. (2) A gang, that included the terrorist Carlos took refuge in Libya despite the death of a Libyan minister, in December 1975 after a raid on the Vienna Headquarters of the OPEC. (3) An assault at Rome airport in December 1973, in which 32 people died, was also planned by Libya, with the aim of disturbing the Geneva Peace Talks between Egypt and Israel. (4) Libya had also set up a guerrilla squad, trained at a closed camp at the former U.S. Wheelus Air Force Base near Tripoli. The squad's mission included assassination attempts on President Sadat of Egypt, and a plot to blow up the residence of the Egyptian military commander of the western desert General Saad Maamoun.

New York Times, 16 July 1976, p.1.

According to the report received in the United States, Libya started training, sending arms to the terrorists. It sent Soviet made arms to Irish Republican Army (IRA), to Muslim guerrillas in Philippines and Thailand and to rebels in Chad and Ethiopia. Libya also supplied financial aid to Leftist forces in Lebanon \$ 50 million, \$ 100 million to Black September, \$ 40 million to guerrillas in Ethiopia, Somalia, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, Panama, and Philippines, Palestinian Resistance Movement and the Polisario Front in the Western Sahara.³⁹

There was persistent demand from the Congress for some countries should be designated as "terrorist". Had this action being taken by the administration it would have resulted in suspending relations with those countries but the Nixon and Ford administrations fought legislation by the Congress in this regard. These administrations did in this case of Libya. The Congress wanted the Nixon administration to prepare a list but it never did.

By the end of 1976, Soviet-Libyan relationship had become stronger following Qadhafi's visit to the Soviet Union for the first time on December 6, 1976,

39. Ibid.

during the visit an agreement on shipping was signed. Protocols were also worked out for talks on economical and technical aid, cultural cooperation. No agreement related to supply of arms was signed. But the top Soviet leaders devoted a lot of attention on him. Reflecting the Soviet desire to broaden ties with Libya. In the Ford administration which had succeeded in 1976, did not have any new ideas on its relations with Libya. There was continuity in the policy because there was hardly a change in the foreign policy establishment. Unlike the Nixon administration began to take note of Libya's revolutionary activities and started exerting pressure against it and supporting terrorism. At a press conference on 19 July 1976, answering a question whether the administration had any evidence or information on Libya's connection with terrorism. The President's reply was that:

We do know that the Libyan government has in many ways done certain things that might have stimulated terrorist activity, but I do not think we ought to discuss any evidence that we have that might prove or disprove that.(40)

This change in the perception of the Ford administration found expression when the United States led a group of European countries in attempting to accuse Libya for

40 Quoted in Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, vol.12, no.30, 1976, p.87.

financing terrorism and supporting terrorism in the 31st session of the United Nations General Assembly convened at the United Nations headquarters in New York on September 21, 1976.⁴¹

Economic Relations - Oil

The United States trade relations with Libya were good during the period 1970-76. By 1970, the United States was Libya's second largest supplier of primary capital goods. The value of United States exports to Libya was \$ 104.1 million. In 1971, the amount had come down to \$ 77.7 million but it increased again in 1973 to \$ 104 million. For the next three years exports and imports both showed substantial increase. In 1974, United States exported commodities valued at \$ 139 million, in 1975 it increased to \$ 232 million and in 1976 it reached \$ 277 million. The increase in the imports from Libya was even more remarkable, from \$ 229 million in 1975 it reached \$ 1,120 million and the next year it more than doubled reaching the figure \$ 2,406 million.⁴²

41 Facts on File, vol.36, no.1873, October 2, 1976, p. 778.

42 Direction of Trade Yearbook (IMF Report), (Washington D.C., 1980), p. 378.

In the trade relations between the two countries oil was the most important element which accounted for large favourable balance of trade in favour of Libya.

After the 1969 revolution the United States was worried that it will affect one of its important sources of oil supplies. The new regime promised to the United States that the American oil companies will continue to operate in Libya without any problem. This was clear in an interagency paper prepared for Washington Special Action Group which stated that, "We see no immediate threat to oil interests, although such could result if the regime is threatened or becomes increasingly unstable".⁴³

The United States was anxious about the operation of oil companies in Libya because of its dependence on Libyan crude, which is lighter and easier to handle. Most of the industrialized countries in Europe need at least 1 million barrel to begin with. Oil from the Arab Gulf region is good but most countries need Libyan oil because it blends best. It has a low sulphur content hence its cleaner and less of a pollutant. When the revolution broke out the Libyan crude oil was very cheap.

43 Quoted in Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, (Boston: Little Brown, 1982), p. 860.

In less than five months after the revolution Libya told the representatives of twenty one oil companies that the Libyan oil was priced too low in relation to its production, cost, high quality and its nearness to market. It also complained that the American companies were not treating the Libyan oil workers properly. The Libyan government consequently made major changes in its oil policy. It announced its decision that it was going to raise the oil prices and demand higher participation, nationalization of the oil industry.⁴⁴ Henry Kissinger, the former Secretary of State, in his memoirs has observed:

Until then the dominant role among the oil-producing countries was played by essentially conservative governments whose interests in increasing their oil revenues was balanced by their dependence on the industrial democracies for protection against external threats. An avowed radical, he set out to extirpate Western influence. He did not care if in the process he weakneed the global economy.(45)

In a surprise move on May 7, 1970, when the oil companies did not adequately respond to the policy decisions of the government. It ordered American oil company Occidental to cut its production. By June 1970, the company's output had come down from 800,000 b/d

44 "Libya: Qadhafi paves the way for an Oil take over", Business Week, May 19, 1973, p.50.

45 Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, (Boston: Little Brown, 1982), p. 860.

in April to 485,000. It was a great blow to a company which had no other source of crude outside the United States. Similar cuts were imposed on American oil companies (Amoseas, Esso, Mobil and Qasis) their total output was reduced by 870,000 b/d between April 1970 to August 1970.

When the Libyan government wanted to increase the price of oil to 44 cents/barrel, the companies rejected the proposal. On September 4, 1970, Libya accepted the offer of the Occidental Oil Company of the United States to increase the posted price by 30 cents, plus 2 cents a year increase for five years, and the rise in tax rate from 50 per cent to 58 per cent. As a result the Libyan oil price which started at \$ 2.53p/barrel reached to \$ 16.35 p/b in July 1976.⁴⁶

The Nixon administration supported Libya's demand for higher prices. James E. Alkins, Head of the Office of Fuels and Energy of the Department of State, felt that the demands were justified. He argued:

You take the Persian Gulf price, take the transportation costs to Europe, and then subtract transportation costs to country X, Libya in this case, and you get a value of oil in that particular spot, Libya. Libyan oil by most calculations seemed to be underpaid.(47)

46 "Take Over in Libya", Newsweek, vol.82, August 27, 1976, p.18.

47 John M. Balir, The Control of Oil, (New York:Pantheon, 1976), p.118.

On September 21, 1970, the three independent partners in the Oasis group (Continental, Amerada and Marathon) agreed to broadly similar terms. By the end of the month all the other companies agreed except Shell Oil Company, which refused to sign the agreement. The Libyan government then stopped the production of Shell, which finally succumbed and agreed to accept the terms which others had agreed. Although the whole oil industry was shocked by these terms, it was unable to resist them, for it had failed to take any united and effective counter-action.

Throughout this battle of wits between the American oil companies and Libya, the Nixon administration supported Libya's action. David Newsom told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July 1970, that, "both Libya's cutback in the production and its demand for higher prices were justifiable."⁴⁸ His contention was that both issues had been raised by the previous royal government and before Qadhafi's take over.

After securing the higher oil prices and tax rate, the Libyan government turned its attention to securing its next object of higher participation of Libya in

48 Department of State Bulletin, vol. LXIII, July 20, 1970, p. 82.

American oil companies and their nationalization. By the end of 1971, it demanded from the companies compensation for the devaluation of US dollars. But the companies resisted the demand. Libya retaliated by taking the disputed amount of \$ 1 million from Esso's Tripoli bank account.

On June 11, 1973, Libya announced the nationalization of Bunker Hunt Oil Company of Dallas, Texas, in retaliation for American support for Israel. Qadhafi described American oil companies as an extension of the U.S. "policy of domination" in the Middle East. American imperialism has exceeded every limit. The Americans support our Israeli enemy, threaten our security with their aircraft carriers, and from time to time, the Americans threaten our territorial waters". Qadhafi warned "the time might come where there will be a real confrontation with oil companies and the entire American imperialism".⁴⁹ The U.S. State Department disclosed on June 12, that Libya had been informed of the government's reaction to the nationalization of Bunker Hunt. Department's spokesman John King had said that, "the United

49 Facts on File, vol.33, no.1702, June 16, 1973, p. 485.

States had a right under international law to expect owners of nationalized property to receive prompt, adequate and effective compensation from the nationalizing government".⁵⁰ The United States vigorously protested and called the act "arbitrary and discriminatory". Libya was not deterred by the United States protests and announced on August 13, 1973, the nationalization of all American oil companies, i.e. Amerada, Continental, Marathan, Occidental, Oasis and Shell. On September 1, 1973, Libya passed a law nationalizing 51 per cent assets of all the oil companies. The action followed a breakdown in negotiations between the companies and the Libyan government which had set August 25, 1973, as the deadline for the takeover. In the talks the oil firms had rejected Libya's demand for 51 per cent participation for fear that such an agreement would precipitate similar demands in the Persian Gulf states, which had a 25 per cent participation pact with the companies. The Libyan government had given the oil firms thirty days to decide on their course of action, on the terms that the government would compensate the companies, with the amount being fixed by a committee of Libyan officials. Each of

50 Ibid.

the companies would be operated by three men board comprising two Libyans and one company executive. One of the Libyans would be named president of the board, and majority rule would prevail. The U.S. State Department asserted on September 4, 1973 that the oil company's takeover "did not comport with Libya's obligations to comply with the agreements it had made with the U.S. firms"⁵¹. Six major oil companies submitted a letter of protest to Libya on September 7, 1973, for its nationalization of 51 per cent of their assets. The statement was released in New York by the U.S. based Atlantic Richfield, Exxon, Mobil, Standard Oil of California and Texaco. The firms had said that they were not "willing to accept terms imposed unilaterally in contravention of valid agreements". They had said "each company individually intends to take actions to protect its rights".⁵² The statement questioned Libya's intentions to provide compensation, saying that past experience showed that the Tripoli government had no "respect for the rights of the companies". The firms affected by the Libyan action were putting pressure on the U.S. government to take countermeasure.

51 Ibid, vol.33, no.1715, September 15, 1973, p. 760.

52 Ibid.

The seriousness of the Libyan action and prospects for counteraction was expressed by two American oil experts on September 8, 1973 that, John Lichtblau of the Petroleum Industry Foundation warned:

If there is a cutback in Libyan oil there will be a worldwide shortage of supply not only because of a tight crude situation but because of transportation difficulties. With tanker rates at record levels and ships in short supply, the existing difficulty in heating homes on the U.S. East Coast would be further aggravated.(53)

Oil economist Walter J. Levy said that "consuming interests are disorganized and demoralized, and a destructive situation exists in the international oil trade".⁵⁴ Levy noted that because of failure of oil companies and oil consuming nations to cooperate in the past two years, "now nothing exists that will ensure supplies for the consumers". Other U.S. government and oil industry sources expressed the belief that Libya's oil seizure would lead to higher world oil prices generally and heighten pressure on the U.S. to alter its support of Israel.

53 Ibid, vol.33, no.1714, September 8, 1973, p. 737.

54 Ibid.

A few months later on February 11, 1974, it fully nationalized three American oil companies, the American Overseas Petroleum Company, California Asiatic Company, and the Libyan-American Oil Company. The Nixon administration was unwilling to accept nationalization of American Oil Companies. It declared that :

Under established principles of international law, measures taken against the rights and property, discriminatory, or based on considerations of political reprisal and economic coercion are invalid and not entitled to recognition by other state.(55)

While the Nixon administration supported the oil companies it realized all the while that it could not do much for the American oil companies against Libyan oil policy.~ On September 24, 1974, President Nixon stated that:

We are having discussions with some of the companies involved. With Libya our relations are not that close that we could have too much influence. The other problems, are the radical elements that presently seem to be on the ascendancy in various countries in the Middle East, like Libya. Those elements, of course, we are not in a position to control.(56)

55 New York Times, 12 February 1974, p.2.

56 Ibid, 24 September 1974, p.6.

When the oil companies were nationalised the Nixon administration supported the companies legal claims against Libya, and it asked other companies not to export oil from the fields which were under the legal dispute. It requested other governments not to receive oil from those fields. But the new England Petroleum Company violated the State Department's advice and started shipping oil from the disputed fields to the New York area, which was totally dependent on Libyan oil. The U.S. position also came under severe attack from the press, especially the Wall Street Journal and the New York Times, which argued that the U.S. position led to Libya's switching to the communist market instead of the West. The State Department circulated a note to the companies stating, "The State Department leaves to the companies concerned the decision whether they wish to proceed with such purchases".⁵⁷ By the end of 1974, the assets of all the companies operating in Libya were either fully nationalized or about 63 per cent were owned by the State. The American oil companies were not interested in ending all their operations in Libya and continued to work within the existing framework. By

57 Ibid, 20 October 1974, p.3.

By 1975, Libya's lead in the oil market started to decline. Its oil was overpriced and it was clearly not competitive with relatively cheaper crudes from the Gulf. By February 1975, Libyan output fell to only 912,000 b/d.⁵⁸ Hence, there was not much ground left for contention between the United States and Libya over the issue of oil, the battle was over by 1976.

At the end of Nixon-Ford administration the American search for rapprochement had already stalled. Libya had established close relations with the Soviet Union. It was in the forefront of fight against Israel and fully supported the Palestinian and other Arab causes. It had emerged as a regional adversary of the United States.

58 Ibid, 15 February 1975, p.8.

CHAPTER III

GROWING DISSATISFACTION

In 1976, a little known politician, former governor of Georgia, and peanut farmer named Jimmy Carter defeated his rival incumbent Republican Gerald Ford and became the President of the United States. Rapprochement with Peoples Republic of China, an arms deal with the Soviet Union and peace in the Middle East were the three important items on his foreign policy agenda. To his agenda other items like human rights and non-proliferation of Nuclear weapons were subsequently added in comparison with the preceding administration. This foreign policy stand towards the third world countries, was somewhat different.

The Carter administration is easily divisible in two sub-periods. Two first years i.e. 1977-78 the administration tried to issue a policy of accommodation with the Soviet Union. But the Soviet policies in some countries like Angola and the horn of Africa convinced the Carter administration that the pursuit of policy of accommodation was not in American interest. Therefore, it began to shift. The Soviet invasion of Afganistan turned out to be the precise point, from there Carter

administration became the opposed to the Soviet policies. In the context of its policy towards Libya, the policy of accommodation with the Soviet Union did not result in any change because of serious problems in U.S.-Libyan relations.

Political Relations:

During the Carter administration Libya's support for terrorist activities in and around Africa increased and this single issue ruled out any possibility of a change in America's policy towards Libya. Congressional displeasure with Libya hardened when in 1976 after Palestinians attacked an El-Al airliner in Istanbul. One of those killed was an aide to Senator Jacob Javits (R. - N.Y.), who was a co-Chairman of a Senate-Subcommittee on terrorism that singled out Libya.¹ All official U.S. statements described its activities as "subversive and destabilizing" and Libya as the main supporter of international terrorism. Many members of the Congress shared this perception of the administration. Senator John H. Heinz (R.-Pa.), stated during the course of hearing that "Libya remained at the forefront of such activity".²

1 New York Times, October 14, 1976, p.16.

2 See the Hearings before the Senate Subcommittee on International Terrorism, U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee, September 14, 1977, 95th Congress, 1st Session.

An unnamed State Department official told the New York Times that "there is every indication that international terrorism is on the increase by Libya".³ The State Department informed that the United States was taking new counter terrorist initiatives. It was developing closer cooperation with friendly governments. However, the State Department conceded that the United States was not succeeding in getting joint enforcement against countries which failed to maintain minimal airport security standards or cooperating counter terrorist programmes.

In July 1977, border war erupted between Libya and Egypt. The United States extended support to Egypt and promptly sent military aid to it. The war lasted only for two days.⁴ After the war President Sadat visited the United States and he asked for American arms to face the threat to the security of his country from Libya. He wanted 200 tanks, F-5E fighter planes, as well as anti-tank weapons and other equipments. But President Sadat did not want the United States to intervene in the

3 New York Times, May 9, 1977, p.4.

4 For detail of the War see Facts on File, vol.37, no.1916, July 30, 1977, p. 569.

disputes in Africa. Both agreed that these disputes should be settled peacefully and should not be aggravated by non-Africans. The Carter administration wanted to fight against terrorism and tried to help Egypt against Libya. It provided Egypt with loan of \$ 20 million.

While it continued to fight terrorist activities carried on by Libya, it also tried to improve relations with Libya. It conveyed to Tripoli that the United States was willing to resume full diplomatic relations with it on the condition that it would cooperate in finding a solution to the Middle East conflict in fighting international terrorism. This conciliatory move was despite the fact that Libya had been named in the United States report as the principal supporter of international terrorist groups including Palestinian factions that opposed any peace settlement with Israel. But Libya was not interested in American conciliatory gestures. It opposed every effort of the United States to settle Arab-Israel conflict. It also worked out to see that other Arab countries to reject, any proposed agreement to solve the conflict. David Newsom, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, stated that:

While the United States had differences with Arab states on the peace process. But with Libya, the differences were more

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profound and involved active and often violent opposition to the process of peace.(5)

Another official Alfred L. Atherton, Jr., similarly stated that:

Libya did not have the influence to block the Middle East peace settlement. However, Qadhafi's willingness to use Libya's resources to support Palestinian extremists and undermine moderate Arab leaders gives a significant potential for disruptive activity, especially, if the peace process appears to be reaching a deadlock.(6)

As a measure of its opposition the United States continued its ban on the delivery of eight C-130 planes to it. It also rejected Libya's proposal to appoint an ambassador in Tripoli.

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- 5 See the statement before the Subcommittee to Investigate Individuals Representing Interests of Foreign Governments, Judiciary Committee, U.S. Senate, August 4, 1977, in Department of State Bulletin, vol.77, October 1977, p.61.
- 6 See the statement before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, Committee on International Relations, U.S., House of Representatives, 95th Congress, 1st Session, June 8, 1977.

While the Libya supported for terrorist groups increased, it also sent signals to the United States that it was reducing its revolutionary activities in and around Africa. In 1978 it signed three UN conventions dealing with plane hijacking and it also provided U.S. State Department with documents confirming its accession to these conventions. In January 1978, Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, was asked whether the United States had changed its view of Libya as a supporter of terrorism. Vance pointed to the three UN conventions with respect to the hijacking in the air and said that, "this action was different from the past".⁷ And that the United States was waiting and observing the situation. On February 14, 1978, Libya refused to permit a Cypriot plane hijacked by Palestinians to land in Tripoli, despite the request by Cypriot President Syros Kyprianou to grant the permission to land on humanitarian ground.⁸ In January 1979, Libyan authority again tried to negotiate freedom of 83 hostages on an Air Tunis plane hijacked by Tunisians trying to secure the release of some political prisoners in Tunis.⁹ However, Libya's

7 Department of State Bulletin, vol.79, February 1979, p.16.

8 New York Times, February 15, 1978, p.2.

9 Ibid, January 7, 1979, p.6.

effort to dis-associate itself from terrorist activities did not succeed. The Carter administration's moderate policy towards Libya on terrorism was short lived. It returned to original line of exerting marginal pressure on Libya on the issue. It expressed its dissatisfaction in Libya's support to terrorist activities.

Despite Libya's increased involvement in terrorist activities, the United States policy towards it became less restrictive in 1978. The State Department in May 1978, lifted its ban on the sale of two Boeing 727s (worth \$ 30 million) ordered by Libyan Air Lines after the Boeing Company of America warned the government that Libya might buy the European Airbus instead. According to the State Department the ban was a mistake. Subsequently, President Carter issued a directive on September 28, 1978, "to take export consequences fully into account when considering the use of export controls for foreign policy purposes".¹⁰ The delivery of the two Boeings in November 1978 was followed up by the sale of 400 heavy trucks worth about \$ 70 million from the

10 Quoted in Johnny Rizq and Robin Allen, "Libya Presses For Decisions on Boeings", Middle Eastern Economic Digest, vol.23, December 14, 1979, p.15.

Oshkosh Truck Corporation of America. The deal had first been approved by the Commerce Department, but in March 1978 the State Department had banned the delivery because:

The trucks and the planes will enhance the military capability of Libya, which is an arch enemy of Egypt and which has given refuge to Japanese terrorists who attacked U.S. embassy in Malaysia in 1975. The Libyans also continue to sponsor subversive actions in neighbouring countries like Egypt, Chad, Niger, Tunisia which are friendly to the United States.(11)

In early 1978, the State Department recommended the sale of three Boeing 747s to Libya on the condition that they would not be used for military purposes. Explaining the rationale behind the deal, David Newsom pointed out that:

The State Department entertained hopes that these decisions would not only be commercially advantageous but would also open opportunities for a more constructive dialogue with Libya on issues which have divided us.(12)

In December 1978, the Federation of American Scientists brought out a report that Libya was developing a nuclear bomb. The FAS Chairman, George Rathjens,

11 New York Times, June 24, 1978, p.25.

12 Department of State Bulletin, vol.78, March 1978, p. 28.

claimed that Libya's nuclear reactor, purchased from the USSR in 1978 was capable of producing enough spent fuel to manufacture a half-dozen nuclear weapons a year. The State Department promptly denied these charges and pointed out that Libya had ratified the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty since 1975. It also pointed out that the Soviet sale of the nuclear reactor had not violated the Treaty.¹³ These conciliatory notes by the State Department would suggest that while America was interested in opposing the terrorist activities of Libya it was also profoundly concerned with protecting American commercial interest. This policy was mainly sponsored by the State Department, but was opposed by the Congress which saw Libya as a Soviet "surrogate". Whose Policy was to expand Soviet influence in the area. The Pentagon which in 1978 ranked Libya only after the Soviet Union, China and North Korea as a possible source of hostilities also disagreed with the State Department policy towards Libya.

Libya's relations with the Soviet Union which had began to evolve since 1970s and it became much closer

13 J.K. Cooley, "Libyan Menace", Foreign Policy, Vol.42, Spring 1981, p.74.

during the four years of the Carter administration. As Libya started purchasing large quantity of Soviet weapons and became militarily a major regional power. The United States saw this as a threat to Israel. Between 1976-80, Libya signed more than \$ 12 billion military agreements with the Soviet Union. According to one assessment:

The country had been transformed into a Soviet weapon depot. It was able to promise and deliver these weapons to states friendly to the Soviet Union and enimical to the United States.(14)

Besides the Soviet weapons, more than five thousand Soviet military and technical personnel also went to Libya. The United States concern did not arise from the weapons because the Libyan armed forces remained undermaned and lacked the capability to absorb and maintain their new arms, many of which were not operational. This situation was not likely to change significantly in the near future, even with the increased foreign technical assistance. The American planners were concerned about the potential use of Libyan air-fields

14 See the statement made by Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in mid 1981. The statement was quoted in New York Times, July 30, 1981, p.5.

and ports, by the Soviet Union. They believed that it was building a potential military threat to Southern Europe, US-Mediterranean air and sea communications. The Libyan air-fields and ports provided the facilities with which these objectives could be easily attained. The Congressional Research Service in a report stated that :

The use of Libyan ports could give the Soviet navy a Mediterranean base that would be extremely useful in challenging US naval power in the area. Even if permanent Soviet bases were not allowed, agreement on the use of Libyan facilities by Soviet forces could significantly upset the calculations of Western strategic planners and Israel. (15)

The United States played a very important role in bringing Egypt and Israel together and getting them to sign the Camp David Accord in 1978. The United States considered this as a great step forward but the Arab countries regarded the agreement as a betrayal of the Arab cause. Egypt was expelled from the membership of the Arab League and was completely isolated. Libya was one of the strongest opponents of the Accord, because

15 Quoted in Richard Deutsch, "Dealing with Qadhafi", Africa Report, vol.27, March/April 1982, p.47.

Col. Qadhafi felt that it did not give the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) its full rights and was against Arab unity. In protest against the accord in December 1978, Libya formed a steadfastness Front comprising of itself, Algeria, Syria, South Yemen and the PLO. The main purpose of the Front was to support all terrorist activities and liberation movements in all Arab countries and to fight against Egypt's peace initiatives.

It started finding Islamic fundamentalist groups in Egypt, Tunisia and Sudan and called for the overthrow of any pro-Western Arab government. It increased military aid to PLO factions in Lebanon and supported Palestinian terrorist organisation attacks on Israel. It trained Palestinian guerrillas and provided them with Soviet weapons.

Libya also supported the POLISARIO (Popular Liberation Front for Rio de Ore and Sagura) guerrillas in the Western Sahara. The aim of the POLISARIO was to overthrow the pro-Western government of Morocco and derived support from Moscow. In a way the Camp David Accord triggered Libya's phase of more militant policies. Chester A. Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State noted

that "Libya's actions in North Africa strike at the heart of U.S. and Western objectives".¹⁶ Many African governments expressed their doubts about Libyan subversive activities to the United States, Presidents Seyni Kountche of Niger, Moussa Traore of Mali and Jaafer Nimeiri of Sudan, repeatedly charged Libyans with attempts to overthrow their government. The governments of Senegal and the Gambia also accused Libya of imprisoning their nationals and putting them in military training against their will. The government of Ghana expelled Libyan diplomats because of their involvement in subversive activities.

Libya was like a rogue elephant running amock Africa, undermining the stability and security of its many African neighbours in its revolutionary zeal. The Carter administration therefore decided to increase aid to these countries to fight against Libya.

In February 1979, when Libya sent troops to Uganda to help Uganda's Idi Amin to fight against the army of Tanzania. The United States reacted sharply by cancelling the sale of three Boeings 747s to Libya.

16 Department of State Bulletin, vol.80, October 1980, p. 28.

in May 1979. Cyrus Vance, Secretary of State, urged the Secretary of Commerce, Juanita Krepps, to stop the previously approved sale in the light of events in Uganda. The State Department also asked the Commerce Department to disapprove the sale of Lockheed L-100 cargo transport. Vance's reversal on the sale of planes came after Senator Richard Stone (D-Flo) had protested against it on the bases of reports that Libya had used a Boeing 727 to evacuate its troops from Uganda. In notification of the Department stated that "it was left with no alternative but to regard the 747s for Libya as having a potential significant military application".¹⁷

The relations between the two countries moved from bad to worse when on December 2, 1979, when the American Embassy in Tripoli was attacked by 2,000 demonstrators. The ground floor of the five storey building was in ruins and the first floor was heavily damaged. The twentyone persons in the embassy at the time of demonstration were able to leave the building by a side door and did not sustain any injuries.

17 New York Times, May 25, 1979, p.5.

The embassy personnel were able to destroy classified equipments and documents before they fled. The demonstration was in support of the seizure of the U.S. embassy in Tehran (Iran) in 1979 and the crowd shouted pro-Iranian slogans.¹⁸

The United States immediately lodged a strong protest with the Libyan government. It charged that the latter had not provided adequate protection for the embassy and had not responded for appeals during the attack. Along with the protest, the United States issued a warning that its relations with Libya were "under active review". The State Department clarified that the phrase "under active review" indicated the possibility of suspension of diplomatic relations.¹⁹ At the time when the embassy building came under attack the United States had no ambassador in Libya, it maintained only twelve officers. As a sequel to these developments on December 5, 1979, the United States suspended all its diplomatic activities with Libya.

18 Facts on File, vol.39, no.2039, December 7, 1979, p. 914.

19 New York Times, December 4, 1979, p.1.

The embassy episode alongwith Libya's role in Uganda convinced the United States that Qadhafi was a "major obstacle to American interests in the Middle East".²⁰ Libya's official apology and offer of compensation and damages on December 2, 1979 attack were considered unsatisfactory in the absence of Col. Qadhafi's willingness to receive the U.S. charge d'affairs and to establish clear responsibility in the Libyan government for contacts in the case of new threats.²¹ In the meantime Libya condemned the seizure of American hostages in Iran and even tried to negotiate their release. Through his brother Billy, President Carter sought Libya's help in getting the hostages release. Billy Carter's connection with Libya was severely criticized in the United States and became a source of embarrassment to the President personally.

20 Jeff McConnell, "Libya: Propaganda and Covert Operations", Counterspy, November 1981, p. 29.

21 Ibid.

Strange Case of Billy Carter:

In 1978, Billy Carter, younger brother of President Carter and working as a gas station operator in Plains, Georgia, made a highly publicized trip to Libya with a group of Georgia legislators and businessmen. Early, in 1979, when a Libyan delegation travelled around the United States to decide where to locate a permanent trade mission, Billy Carter served as one of the hosts to the delegations. He quickly became the focal point for attacks from President's opponents. When he was asked whether he realized that his association with the Libyans would be resented by American Jews, he replied, "There are a lot more Arabs than there are Jews".²² This statement was widely interpreted as being anti-Semitic. As expected Billy denied these allegations, but the damage had already been done. Following the visit of the Libyans, Billy's income dropped to nearly zero. At that time Libyans offered to help. Through intermediaries, they made arrangements for him to represent them in the sale of their high quality oil, and agreed to lend him some money as advance. Before he could embark on this business, there was a lot of

22 Jimmy Carter, Keeping Faith (London: Collins, 1982), p. 546.

publicity about it. The focal point of these criticism was that he had not registered as an agent of a foreign country. This was a legal requirement, which Billy Carter and his attorneys had discussed with the federal agencies for several months, but nothing had been done following the discussion. As a result, the Department of Justice, the Internal Revenue Service, and various congressional committee investigators descended on him.

On July 14, 1980, Billy Carter registered with the Justice Department as an agent of the Libyan government.²³ He confirmed that the Libyan government paid for his trip to Rome and Tripoli in the fall of 1978. But he denied that he had any business dealings with the Government of Libya. Billy said, "he had agreed to visit Libya, and later was host to the Libyan delegation in Atlanta in the hope that the two gestures would increase trade between the U.S. and Libya".²⁴ He denied claims by other Georgians on the trip that a cooperation was to be set up to funnel Libyan investment to the U.S. with Billy Carter holding the controlling share. He also disclosed that he had received more than \$ 220,000 in payments from Libya in 1980. Certainly a huge amount for a former gas station attendant.

23 New York Times, 15 July 1980, p.2.

24 Ibid.

Billy Carter had been ordered to register by the U.S. District Court in Washington, after the Justice Department filed a formal complaint demanding that he should file as a foreign agent or be held in contempt of court. The Department charged him with violation of the Foreign Agents Registrations Act by failing to report services he had undertaken on behalf of the Libyans since 1978.²⁵

Billy Carter entered into a civil consent agreement with the U.S. government. He promised not to engage in political or public activities for Libya without submitting proper registration statements, without admitting the charges of the Justice Department. He acknowledged receiving \$ 220,000 in two instalments from the Libyans. He claimed that the amount was a loan. His lawyers however admitted that no repayment plan had been arranged. Billy also acknowledged receiving various personnel gifts. His registration statement stated, "Billy Carter and an associate named Ronald Sprague, had helped to arrange increased oil supplies from Libya for Charter Oil Company of Florida".²⁶

25 Ibid.

26 Facts on File, vol.40, no.2077, August 29, 1980, p. 647.

These explanations raised more questions in than the answers. The result was that on 24 July, 1980, the Senate appointed a special panel to investigate Billy Carter's role as a paid agent of Libya. Senator Birch Bayh (D-Ind.) was appointed as the Chairman of the panel, consisting of five Democrats and four Republicans.²⁷ The move for Senate inquiry had gathered momentum after it came to be known on 22 July 1980 that the White House had used Billy as a liasion to the Libyans, with a view to gain release of American hostages in Iran. The White House stated that :

Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Adviser, had arranged a meeting through Billy Carter with a Libyan representative to ask for assistance in freeing the hostages. (28)

Brzezinski in his long memoirs of White House years has nothing to say on this subject. Reportedly the meeting had been held in November 1979. On the very day the Senate decided to appoint an investigating panel, it was reported that Rosalynn Carter was the person who had suggested that Billy Carter use his

27 New York Times, 25 July 1980, p.4.

28 Ibid.

Libyan connection in the attempt to help the hostages. On July 24, 1980, the White House confirmed that Rosalynn had made a call in November 1979 to arrange the meeting of White House officials.²⁹ Damaging information about Billy Carter came in bits by bits between July 25-30, 1980. On July 29, 1980, the President had expressed his willingness to testify the case before congressional investigation. Another turn in this strange case of Billy Carter came when on August 4, 1980, President told the press that :

He had no doubt that complete disclosure of the facts will clearly demonstrate that at no time did my brother influence me in my decisions toward Libya or the policies of this government concerning Libya.(30).

In his justification President Carter sent a report to the Senate panel. In his report the President asserted that, "neither he nor any member of his administration had violated any law or committed any impropriety in this matter".³¹ The President said that:

He had asked his counsel to draft a rule that would bar employees of the executive branch from dealing with any member of the

contd.....

29 Ibid.

30 Facts on File, vol.40, no.2073, August 1, 1980, p. 569.

31 New York Times, 5 August, 1980, p.1.

President's family undercircumstances
that create either the reality or
appearance of improper favour or influence.(32)

The main thrust of the Presidential explanation was to deny that his decisions regarding Libya had been not affected in any way by the actions of his brother, that he did not know of the Libyan payments to his brother and that he himself was going to be benefitted financially or otherwise. He also confessed that as on suggestions of Rosalynn he had decided to use Billy to set up a meeting with Libyan representative to help release hostages in Iran. He confessed that his was a bad judgement on his part that this would have enhanced his brother's stature in Libya. At the same time he accepted that, "I did what I thought was best for our country and best for the hostages. And I believe that, that's exactly what Billy was doing".³³

The Senate investigation of Billy Carter, as a Libyan agent opened eventually on August 4, 1980. David D. Newsom, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, testified at the opening session. He stated that :

32 For details see the Ibid, 5 August, 1980, p.1.

33 Ibid.

The Libyan government of Col. Muammer el-Qadhafi as radical and unorthodox, extremely anti-Israel and a sponsor and trainer of international terrorists. On the other hand, the U.S. sought good relations with it in view of its strategic position on the Mediterranean and the American reliance on Libyan oil, of which the U.S. imported a large volume. (34).

Newsom also reported that:

The U.S. made several official contacts with Libya on the matter of the American hostages in Iran at the same time that the White House enlisted Billy Carter as liaison between the two governments on the same matter.(35)

Several Senators on the special panel holding the hearing questioned the merit of using Billy Carter outside official channels that were pursuing the same project. Among them were Senator Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), Senator Patrick J. Leahy (D.-Vt.).

Important newspapers of the United States criticized President Carter on the Billy Carter-Libyan connection. The Cleveland Press (Cleveland, Ohio, 6 August, 1980),

34 Facts on File, vol.40, no.2074, August 8, 1980, p. 595.

35 Ibid.

wrote:

There may be no illegalities on the part of the White House in the Billy-Libyan episode but it is straining credibility to say, as the President did, that there were no improprieties. The President is not his brother's keeper. But he is President, and the public has a right to expect that he and his aides would show better judgement than they did in the handlings of Brother Billy and the Libyan connection. (36)

The Lincoln Journal, (Lincoln, Neb., August 5, 1980), and the Milwaukee Journal, (Milwaukee, Wisc., August 5, 1980), both carried editorials that stated, "Overall the President came across as an honest man wounded by an affair largely beyond his control that has been blown out of proportion by political opponents and media".³⁷ The Plain Dealer (Cleveland, Ohio, August 6, 1980), criticized, "the President has made judgements by, in effect, seeming to place his brotherly love for Billy on par with the interests of the nation".³⁸ The Detroit News, (Detroit, Mich., August 6, 1980), wrote:

President Carter probably did not affect public opinion significantly with his report to the nation on brother Billy's relationship with Libya, or his own reaction to that situation. Jimmy Carter has been a weak and vacillating president. But whatever his errors of omission or commission, he does not deserve a brother like Billy. (39)

36 Editorials on File, vol.11, no.15, August 1-15, 1980, p. 918.

37 Ibid, p.919.

38 Ibid, p.921.

39 Ibid, p. 927.

The Special Senate Subcommittee investigating Billy Carter's ties to Libya took testimony from Billy Carter between August 21-22, 1980.⁴⁰ The major points of his testimony were that: Firstly, the \$ 220,000 he received from the Libyans was an advance on a \$ 500,000 loan he was hoping to get. There was no formal loan agreement made for the money. He had spent much of the money, mostly to pay off debts. Secondly, the election of his brother to the Presidency had changed his own life drastically. He could no longer live the life of "a typical small-town businessman". His mounting financial problems had forced him to cast about for a source of income, such as the Libyan connection. Thirdly, he realized that he had been invited to Libya because he was the President's brother. But he stated to the Libyans at the outset that he had "absolutely no influence over the policy or decisions made by the United States or made by my brother".⁴¹ Fourthly, he had never discussed with the Libyans or anyone in the U.S. government, the Lockheed C-130 cargo airplanes the Libyans purchased from the U.S. The planes had never been delivered because of a U.S. proscription against such

40 New York Times, 23 August 1980, p.4.

41 Ibid.

such sales to countries abetting terrorism. He had not received words in advance that the Justice Department knew of his loan from Libya before he told investigators about it. The Senate investigation continued from September 4 until 17, 1980.

A special Senate Subcommittee was critical, on October 2, 1980, of President Carter and top officials of his Administration in handling the Billy Carter case.⁴² But the panel, in issuing a report on its investigation, found no illegal or clearly unethical activity by federal officials. The case concerned Billy Carter's relationship with Libya. The panel's nine week investigation focused on whether Libya attempted to influence U.S. policy through Billy Carter and whether he received favoured treatment from the Administration. The panel concluded that Billy Carter's activity, "was contrary to the interests of the President and the U.S. and merits severe criticism. The President's brother, it said, had allowed himself to become obligated to a nation whose interests are often inimical to ours".⁴³ President Carter was faulted for having failed to make clear to Libya that it "should not expect to gain any influence in the United

42 Ibid, 3 October 1980, p.2.

43 Ibid.

States, by cultivating a relationship with President's brother. The President's use of his brother to contact Libyan diplomats on the American hostage crisis with Iran was deplored by the panel as "ill-advised". It was unlikely the diplomatic move would have affected the hostage situation, the panel concluded, and Billy Carter's role in it served primarily to enhance his "importance in the eyes of the Libyans". The panel further expressed surprise at the President's attitude of disinterest concerning his brother's activities with respect to Libya. The Subcommittee praised the Justice Department investigation of Billy Carter for failing to register as a foreign agent. It had been "honestly and conscientiously conducted"⁴⁴ it said. But the panel expressed "significant concern" about the handling of intelligence information during the case by Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti, National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski and Central Intelligence Agency Director Stansfield Turner. By withholding intelligence information regarding Billy Carter from the President the report said, "Brzezinski and Civiletti had acted to protect the President from taking personal responsibility for the proper course of conduct in a situation

44 Ibid.

which involved both foreign policy and law enforcement aspects".⁴⁵ Brzezinski was criticized for having telephoned Billy Carter and on the basis of intelligence information, having advised him against dealing with Libya. The call "carried the significant risk that sources could have been compromised",⁴⁶ the panel said.

The media's response to the report indicated mild disapproval of the President but it did question his honesty and sincerity. The Chattanooga Times, (Chattanooga, Tenn., October 10, 1980), felt that the Billy Carter affair was nothing more than a major display of poor judgement. It felt that report of the committee demonstrated that the case was a model of emptiness.⁴⁷ The Tulsa World, (Tulsa, Okla, October 4, 1980) wrote that the report had no surprises. There was no real evidence of criminal conduct by the President. But it agreed with the Chattanooga Times that the "President's error was failing to adequately separate himself and his office from the admittedly outrageous acts of his brother".⁴⁸

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Editorials on File, vol.11, no.19, October 1-15, 1980, p. 1172.

48 Ibid, p.1173.

The Boston Herald, (Boston, Mass., October 11, 1980), summed it accurately by saying, "whether one is mild or harsh in such judgements also depends on what standards are being used to measure official conduct".⁴⁹

A Justice Department report made on April 21, 1981, exonerated the President.⁵⁰ It said that, "nothing suggests that President Carter acted to frustrate or impede the Department of Justice's investigation of Billy Carter or that he sought to assist brother in attempts to engage in business transactions with the Libyans".⁵¹ It also exonerated Brzezinski as it found the National Security Adviser's call to Billy Carter to warn him about dealing with a company wanting more oil from Libya, the report sanctioned it as "appropriate". The entire incident only underlined the greed of Billy Carter and his un-ethical conduct in utilising his brothers position. But it did not have any significant impact on the course of the United States relations with Libya.

49 Ibid, p. 1175.

50 New York Times, 22 April 1980, p.2.

51 Ibid.

The Billy Carter affair created an impression that the administration's softness towards Libya was the result of this unholy connection and not the result of the administration's desire to defend the interest of the United States. Libya was fighting against all its neighbours hardly any one was spared. In January 1980, Tunisian President Bourguiba accused Libya of sponsoring the attack on the town of Gafsa. But the charge was denied. The Carter administration protested against Libya's subversive activities and helped Bourguiba government by sending arms to Tunisia. Subsequently Chester Crocker, who served as Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, in the Reagan administration points out that Libya had made this "outrageous intervention" possibly with the expectation that the Tunisians would rise in support of the infiltrators. Tunisia, a country with which the United States maintained close and special relationship was disturbed by the action of Government of Libya. It needed to prepare itself against the possibility of repetition of this type of incident. Crocker said, "with this reason the administration had increased aid programme to Tunisia".⁵²

52 See the statement before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 8, 1981, in Department of State Bulletin, vol.81, October 1981, p. 28.

This event marked the beginning of series of steps taken by the United States against Libya. In February 1980, it withdrew its embassy personnel from Tripoli and in May expelled its six members of the Libyan's People's Bureau in Washington. By mid 1980, the U.S. embassy in Tripoli was closed. In March 1980, civil war broke out in Chad. The forces of President Goukouni and Defense Minister Habre of Chad fought against each other. Libya helped the side of President Goukouni by sending 7,000 troops. This intervention by Libya angered the Carter administration. The massive incursion of Libyan troops and weapons helped the government of President of Goukouni and on December 15, Habre had to leave the country. The intervention thus gained an important leverage in a neighbouring country by Libya. Chad was an important country for the United States. The Carter administration increased the financial aid to Chad in response to Libyan threat and tried to negotiate with Habre through Organization of African Unity (OAU) for future withdrawal of Libyan forces and bringing peace in Chad.

Libya's general pattern of unacceptable worldwide conduct convinced the Carter administration that it could not carry any longer business as usual with Libya. This finally led to the closure of its Bureau in Washington in May 1980.

The only dimension of the United States policy towards Libya remained unaffected by the up and downs of politics were the trade relations. The United States continued to export Construction, Mining, Agriculture, Electrical, Drilling equipments to Libya. In 1977-78 these were valued \$ 197,607 thousand which increased to \$ 426,169 thousand in 1980. And while its imports from Libya \$ 4,542,014 thousand in 1977, they became \$ 7,778,571 thousand in 1980.⁵³ Libya was one of the important trading partners of the United States and Carter administration wanted to retain the relationship. David Newsom, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, stressed that while there were political differences :

We also have important general trade interests in Libya. Given the high volume of U.S. oil purchases from Libya which may surpass \$ 9 billion in 1980, we may be running a bilateral balance of payment deficit of around \$ 8.5 billion and its major developments programmes, Libya represents a valuable potential market for American products and services. (54)

As the Carter administration neared the end of its first term in the office it submitted a report to

53 U.N. Yearbook of International Trade Statistics (New York), vol.1, 1981, p. 596.

54 Department of State Bulletin, vol.80, November 1980, p. 31.

the Congress in which it set the American prospective on relations with Libya as follows:

There are few governments in the world with which we have more sharp and frequent policy differences than Libya. Libya has steadfastly opposed our efforts to reach and carry out the Camp David Accords. We have strongly differing attitudes towards the PLO and the support of terrorism. Within OPEC, Libya has promoted sharply higher prices and the interruption of oil shipments to the United States and other Western nations. On the other hand, Libya illustrates the principle that our relationships with other nations can never be cast in absolute terms. Libya is a major oil supplier, and its high quality crude oil is important to the mix of our East Coast Refineries. Libya has publicly and privately opposed Iran's seizure of our hostages and for a time joined other Muslim states in opposing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Our policies and actions towards Libya have therefore mixed firmness with caution. Although we maintain mutual diplomatic recognition, we do not now exchange ambassadors. We firmly oppose Libya's military adventurism and any terrorist activities, at the same time and while staying firm on these principles, we recognize the mutual advantages of existing trade relationships.(55)

55 See the President Carter's report on August 5, 1980, to the Senate Judiciary Sub Committee in Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, vol.38, no.32, August 9, 1980, p. 2305.

The Carter administration still was trying to balance its relations with Libya it resisted its efforts to destabilize its neighbour and provided them with assistance to withstand the pressures emanating from Libya. As far as its interests in the Middle East were concerned they were not compatible with Libya's foreign policy objective which was securing justice for the Arab cause by militant activities. However, the Carter administration was also aware that there were some points of convergence of interest between the two countries despite its close military links with the Soviet Union, Libya did not hesitate in supporting the Afghan Mujahedeen who were fighting against the Russian occupying forces. It also did not approve the seizure of American embassy in Tehran. It tried to negotiate between Iran and the United States. However, what still held them together was their common economic interest. The United States was interested in obtaining Libyan crude at a reasonable price. Libya, of course, was interested in American dollars which resulted on the sale.

CHAPTER IV

CONFRONTATION

The election of Ronald Reagan to the United States presidency in 1980 produced a dramatic shift in the US-Libyan relationship. Once in office, the Reagan administration systematically increased the military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Libya in an effort to isolate it internationally and promote the downfall of the Qadhafi government. Qadhafi was labelled as a Soviet puppet and characterized as an "international rogue", who had to be replaced. In a little over a year, US foreign policy towards Libya was fundamentally altered. The US government had come to recognize Libya, not only as a nuisance but also as an enemy.

The Reagan administration took the first step, when it ordered Libya to close its embassy (Libyan People's Bureau) in Washington on May 6, 1981, and expelled its diplomats on the ground of its support for the norms of international behaviour.¹ Dean Fischer, the Spokesman of the Department, described this as decision to reduce the level of relationship to "the lowest level consistent with the maintenance of diplomatic relations".² The order did not affect

1 New York Times, 7 May 1981, p.1.

2 See the statement of Dean Fischer, Spokesman of the Department, May 6, 1981, in Department of State Bulletin, vol. 91, July 1981, p.45.

Libya's mission to the United Nations, which was located in New York city. The administration went ahead with its policy of isolating Libya. In October 1981, it asked all the Americans living in Libya to leave the country. It invalidated passports for travel to the country. The action is normally taken when a country anticipates threat to the life and security of its citizens. This is also a signal that the country taking the action expects further deterioration in relationship and is preparing for it. The situation showed no improvement. Six months later the United States was still trying to explain why it took the step. On December 10, 1981, the Acting Secretary of State, William Clark pointed out the reasons for taking the steps. According to him in "the last six months Libya had increased its efforts to undermine the neighbouring states and worked against American interests. This had led to a rapid worsening of the security climate for American citizens".³ Therefore, the Department advised Americans to leave the country as soon as possible. No doubt there were grave steps but the United States felt obliged to take them.

3 Department of State Bulletin, vol.82, January 1982, p. 46.

This action was repeated by warnings to the American oil companies operating in Libya to remove their people and terminate their operations. By late 1981 most of the companies began evacuating their American employees. Among them, Exxon had terminated all its operations in Libya as early as November 1981, while others such as Mobil Oil Company did not terminate its contracts until the summer of 1982. These oil companies had been replacing Americans with other nationals for more than eighteen months prior to the administration's decision and that most oil sales to American purchases had stopped by mid-October 1981. The administration's decision was not well received by Americans working in Libya. Most of the two thousand U.S. citizens living in Libya did not want to leave the country. Relations between the two countries were going down the hill. The United States believed that Libya was planning a coup in Sudan or Egypt. Therefore, in May 1981, it sent two radar surveillance aircrafts (AWACs) to monitor the Egyptian-Sudanese borders. The role of AWACs was to coordinate the military support sent to Egypt. The administration justified this act by saying:

We in the West are increasingly concerned about Libya's lawless activity in a direct military sense and in its support for

contd.....

bloodshed and terrorism worldwide. As recently two weeks ago, Libya again espoused the right of the Libyan people to destroy their opponents. We do not mind the rhetoric, but when it applies assets, training and indulges in work even in this hemisphere, then we have a problem and one which, we in United States are going to give increasing attention to and coordinate to deal with.(4)

In June 1981, the Reagan administration increased its aid to Egypt, Sudan and Tunisia as the United States interests in these countries were threatened by regional conflicts and instability which invited Soviets. Sudan, Tunisia and Egypt were the United States largest aid recipient in North Africa, and these countries were threatened by Libyan aggressive policies.

The Reagan Administration's policy towards Libya should be viewed in the context of its policy towards countries of North Africa. On March 14, 1981, Lannon Walker, Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, in a statement before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, stressed American interest in the economic development of the countries of North

4 See the statement by Secretary Alexander Haig before the St. Louis Town Hall-Forum on May 19, 1981, Department of State Bulletin, vol.81, July 1981, p.17.

Africa. He said that, "the United States bilateral assistance was provided for the economic development as it intends to maximize the effectiveness of resources through coordination".⁵ Walker claimed that the United States was committed to defend these governments in North Africa from "regional" and "external threats". "We do not believe", said Walker, "that United States interests are served when our African friends regards us as unresponsive to their legitimate security rights".⁶ He indicated to the Committee the administration's plan to help Sudan, Egypt and Tunisia by providing equipment, training and economic support. This was intended to enable them to withstand pressure from Libya.

The State Department Officials reiterated their point of view before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Morris Draper said that Egypt must receive help from the United States in modernizing its armed forces if it was to play role in "our common strategic approach to regional problem".⁷ Egypt felt dependent on the United

5 Department of State Bulletin (Washington D.C.), vol.81, May 1981, p.26.

6 Ibid.

7 For the text of the statement by Morris Draper, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs before the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the House Affairs Committee, 26 March 1981, Dept. of State Bulletin, vol.81, May 1981, p.18.

States for modernizing army. Draper argued that this need should be seen in the context of "prevailing instability in the region". He did not leave anyone in doubt as to which country was the source of regional stability. He accused Libya of pursuing "a heavy handed aggressive policy as it is heavily armed with modern Soviet equipments". In order to build a countervailing force the United States was relying mainly on Egypt, the most populous state and to some extent on Sudan and Tunisia. Therefore, the Reagan administration gave the military assistance of \$ 750 million to Egypt, \$100 million to Sudan, \$1.3 million to Tunisia in June 1981 to improve their military modernization programme.⁸

The Libyan force had entered the territory of Chad in the winter of 1980. The presence of these forces was resented by the government of Chad. The United States in cooperation with Sudan and Egypt began to put pressure on the government of Chad to seek the withdrawal of Libyan forces. It wanted them to be replaced with the peace keeping force of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to maintain order in Chad in once the Libyan forces left. Subsequently,

8 New York Times, 20 June 1981, p.4.

an African peace keeping force was deployed which was organized by the Chairman of Kenya's President Daniel Arap Moi. The United States directly supported the peace keeping effort. It contributed \$ 12 million to support the Nigerian and Zairian contingents with non-lethal equipments and to aid transport of supplies to Chad.⁹ It also supported the Organization of African Unity efforts to promote reconciliation among various Chadian factions. By June 1982, Chadian President Goukouni who refused reconciliation efforts proposed by the OAU, had been forced out of Chad and replaced by his principal rival Hissene Habre.

The Reagan administration's perception of Libyan conduct was quite evident in Chester A. Crocker, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, statement:

African security is not served if Soviet arms, Cuban forces, and Libyan money and arms are combined to, overthrow legitimate government in the horn. We can not ignore the real security threats facing our African partners, especially when these are prompted or fueled by our global adversaries. (10)

9 Ibid, 22 April 1982, p.6.

10 See the Statement of Chester A. Crocker, Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, dated 8 June 1982, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in the Department of State Bulletin, vol.82, August 1982, p.22.

Libya also threatened the government of Niger as its next target for subversion. The Libyan government trained few anti-government rebels. The United States was responsive to requests for help against such threats. In Niger, the Reagan administration established a modest foreign military sales programme. Another country in the region was Somalia, whose security was threatened from the Ethiopian side. With the massive shipments of Soviet arms, and a major expansion of its military forces Ethiopia had largest army in the region. In August 1981, Ethiopia signed a treaty with Libya and South Yemen which led to Libyan-Ethiopian cooperation in subversion and armed attack against both Sudan and Somalia. In the summer of 1982, Ethiopian regular troops supporting a smaller number of Somali dissidents trained and armed in Ethiopia occupied two Somali towns. The Ethiopian action was intended to overthrow the Somalia government. The United States then airlifted several shipments of arms to Somalia in 1982.¹¹

11 New York Times, June 3, 1982, p.1.

Shooting Down of Libyan Planes:

While the United States was trying to support Libya's neighbours which were being subverted and attacked, a major direct conflict between the United States and Libya took place in August 1981. According to the American version of events, two U.S. Navy F-14 aircraft were carrying out routine exercises in international waters in Gulf of Sirte in the south central Mediterranean. In the morning of August 19, these aircrafts were attacked by two Libyan SU-22 fighter aircrafts, after they had been fired upon the American F-14s based on U.S. aircraft carrier Nimitz, retaliated and shot down both the Libyan aircrafts.¹² This discription was given by Casper W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense and Lt. Gen. Philip J. Gast, United States Air Force, (USAF), Director of Operations of the Joint Chief of Staffs, at a news briefing held on August 19, 1981. Weinberger said that the United States government was protesting against this "unprovoked attack through diplomatic channels".¹³ The attack had occurred according to him over 60 nautical miles from the nearest land. He also informed that the President

42 Ibid, August 20, 1981, p.1.

13 Department of State Bulletin, vol.81, October 1981, p.57.

had been informed and approved the actions taken by the Airforce. The United States regarded this event very seriously. The entire National Security Council network was alerted immediately and the leaders of the Congress were notified. The United States blamed Libya entirely for this action and argued that its action brought about these "consequences". The leaders of the Congress willing to support the Reagan administration with its confrontation with Libya after they had been briefed by Deputy Secretary of State William P. Clark. The House adopted an amendment and condemned Libya's policies and support for terrorism.¹⁴

Spokesman of the State Department on the day of the incident emphasized that the exercise in accordance with the international practice the United States announced on August 12 and 14 that it will be holding these exercises, prior notification of air operation had also been given. The spokesman warned, "that any further attack against U.S. forces operating on international waters and airspace will be resisted with force if necessary".¹⁵

14 Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, vol.39, no.50, December 12, 1981, p. 2475.

15 See the statement of Alan Romberg, Spokesman of the Department on 19 August 1981, in Department of State Bulletin, vol.81, October 1981, p.58.

The reason for the conflict between the United States and Libya was that their differing interpretation of territorial seas. The United States considered the three nautical miles as the legally permissible sea. Many countries on the other hand claimed more than three nautical miles, some even claimed three hundred kilometers as their territorial seas. The United States continued to assert that it was not bound by international law to recognize claim in excess of three miles. The oceans beyond the territorial seas are the high seas on which all nations enjoy freedom of navigation and overflight, including the right to engage in naval maneuvers. The United States claimed that while it was willing to except twelve miles territorial seas only as a part of comprehensive law of sea treaty which will protect United States navigation and other interests in the ocean. Although it can not be conclusively proved in the absence of documentation but the juxter position of events would suggest strongly that the United States decided to undertake naval exercises in order to contest Libya's claim that the Gulf of Sirte was within its territorial sea. If Libya did not challenge the American action, a precedent was established. And its credibility as a revolutionary state was undermined and if it did challenge, the United States had a

far greater capacity to end the challenge. Libya was thus placed on the horns of dilemma and it decided to sacrifice SU-22 fighter aircrafts. It could have hoped that its two planes would be able to attack the Americans successfully without inviting retaliation.

Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, reiterated the argument that the United States was "totally in our rights to conduct these exercises".¹⁶ His state^{ment}/clearly indicated the new assertive and aggressive style of the Reagan administration which was entirely different from that of preceding Carter administration. Said Haig:

Its a clear manifestation that this administration's intentions to insist that our rights and our obligations in the international community be met in the period ahead.(17)

President Reagan's response to a question about his message about the Gulf of Sirte incident also suggests its preplanned nature:

We are determined that we are going to close that window of vulnerability that has existed for some time with regard to our defensive capability.(18)

16 Alexander M. Haig, Jr., CAVEAT: Realism, Reagan and Foreign Policy (London:Weidenfeld Nicolson, 1984), p.82.

17 Ibid.

18 New York Times, August 20, 1981, p.8.

Libya protested against the maneuvers by the United States and its leader Qadhafi accused the U.S. of "persisting in provocations and terror". He called on "active forces" in the Arab world to "declare a state of mobilization to face imperialist-Zionist and reactionary challenges". A note of protest delivered to the Belgian embassy in Tripoli on August 19, accused the U.S. of "international terrorism". The note charged that the incident occurred "within Libyan territorial waters" and was a "flagrant and overt violation of all international laws". (The U.S. maintained an office in the Belgian embassy.) Massive demonstrations protesting the U.S. downing of the two Libyan planes were reported in Benghazi and Tripoli on August 19 and 20. The Libyan press agency, JANA, had criticized these maneuvers on August 19, that the naval exercises in the Gulf of Sirte had exposed "the nature and reality of American aggressive intentions" against Libya.¹⁹

Western European reaction was a mixture of support and apprehension, according to the New York Times, August 20. The reaction in newspaper editorials

19 Facts on File, vol.41, no.2127, August 21, 1981, p. 590.

and from foreign ministry aides reportedly supported the U.S. firmness against Libya, but suggested unease over the apparent increasing signs of an aggressive U.S. foreign policy. The Soviet Union and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) did not comment on the U.S.-Libyan aerial confrontation.

The major U.S. newspapers also supported the Reagan administrations maneuvers in the Gulf of Sirte on August 19. The Indianapolis Star (Indianapolis, Ind.) Anchorage Times (Anchorage, Alas), The Union Leader (Manchester, N.H.), Des Moines Tribune (Des Moines, Iowa), Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles, Calif.), The News and Courier (Charleston, S.C.), St. Louis Post-Dispatch (St. Louis, Mo.), The Honolulu Advertiser (Honolulu, Ha.), The Blade (Toledo, Ohio), Roanoke Times & World News (Roanoke, Va.), The Oregonian (Portland, Ore.), The Morning News (Wilmington, Del.), all these papers wrote about the U.S.-Libyan aerial clash as a "satisfying incident".²⁰ St. Louis Globe-Democrat (St. Louis, Mo.), in its editorial of 23 August, 1981, said that :

20 Editorial on Files (New York), vol.12, no.16, August 16-31, 1981, p. 932.

This kind of firm response to the Libyan move against the Sixth Fleet airmen will make the Communists less inclined to challenge American forces. U.S. diplomats and other American personnel overseas are safer today thanks to President Reagan's much tougher stance. Reagan, unlike Carter, understands that peace is maintained through strength, not weakness. (21)

The Atlanta Constitution (Atlanta, Ga.), argued that, "if we had failed to defend ourselves, Qadhafi might have viewed that failure as a sign of weakness and stepped up attacks upon us".²² Herald Journal (Syracuse, N.Y.) suggested that :

If armed clashes like the one this week are to be avoided, the world will need an accepted set of uniform rules, a set in which territorial waters are not pushed nearly as far as Libya has tried to do so. (23)

Chicago Tribune (Chicago, Ill.), wrote that:

This was not a case of testing the Libyans or provoking them. It was a case of demonstrating our right to use international waters that some day we may need to use. To have ignored the Libyan attack would lend credence to the false territorial claim and would invite even more aggressive behaviour by the Libyans. The United States is a powerful nation that must, on occasion, use its power to defend its pause. (24)

21 Ibid, p. 934.

22 Ibid, p. 936.

23 Ibid, p. 939.

24 Ibid, p. 941.

The Oil Embargo:

Alongwith the political pressure, the Reagan administration used economic pressure as another way to stop Libya's terrorist activities. The administration believed that Libya's oil revenues were used for the purchase of arms, training of international terrorist conducting direct intervention in the neighbouring states of North Africa. The administration believed that by putting pressure on the Libyan oil industry, the United States would make it difficult for Libya to finance terrorism. This approach was encouraged by world economic conditions (the world oil glut), and by the enthusiastic attitude of the Congress. Members of Congress pointed out that the United States bought 30 per cent to 40 per cent of Libya's total oil output, and if nothing else, a embargo would force Libyans to switch markets and perhaps take less for their oil.²⁵ In the House, some forty congressmen sponsored a bill mandating a cut off of U.S. oil purchases from Libya and an end to American exports to that country. The bill had the bipartisan support. Tom Dawney (D.-N.Y.) and Edward Markey (D.-Mass.) and two Republicans, Dave Dreier (R.-Califor.) and Jack Kemp (R.-N.Y.) lead the

25 New York Times, October 9, 1981, p.11.

fight. The two Democrats were regarded as liberals and the Republicans as the conservatives.²⁶ Once the discussion began on the bill in the committee some members expressed their exasperation over the fact that the Reagan administration had failed to take forceful action against Libya. Though these members did not spell out clearly by what they meant as forceful action. Some analyst pointed out that the measure would have passed had the Reagan administration not intervened.

The administration had serious objection against the passage of the bill. But instead of picking up quarrel with the congressional committee, the State Department wrote to the House Foreign Affairs Committee requesting more time to study the issue. Because of a procedural dispute the proposed bill was never taken on the floor of the House. A similar bill was introduced in the Senate which was backed by the Senators, Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Gary Hart (D.-Colo.). The similar measure was backed by liberal and moderate Senators

26 Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, vol.39, no.43, October 24, 1981, p. 2437.

including African Subcommittee Chairman Nancy Kassebaum (R.-Kans.) and Rudy Baschwitz (R.-Minn.), the Chairman of the Near Eastern Subcommittee.²⁷ On October 21, 1981, Senators Edward Kennedy and Gary Hart, jointly sponsored an amendment declaring that :

Congress condemned the Libyan government for its support of international terrorism movements, its disruption of efforts to establish peace in the Middle East, and its attempts to control other North African Nations and calling on the President to review steps the United States might take with its allies to force Libya to stop such activities including the possibility of prohibiting the importation of Libyan oil.(28)

Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Charles Percy (R.-Ill.), introduced an amendment . condemning, "the Libyan government for its support of international terrorist movements, its effort to obstruct positive movements towards the peaceful resolution of problems in the Middle East and its actions to destabilize and control governments in neighbouring states in Africa".²⁹ The Percy measure also called upon President Reagan to "conduct an immediate review

27 Ibid.

28 Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, vol.39, no.50, December 12, 1981, p. 2437.

29 Ibid, vol.39, no.43, October 24, 1981, p. 2084.

of concrete steps the United States should take, individually and in concert with its allies, to bring economic and political pressure on Libya to cease such activities"³⁰.

Thus it is clear that the activities of Libya had completely eliminated American public opinion. It is also evident that the Congress reflected that the widely held conviction, that the Libya's support for terrorist activities must cease. Therefore, the Congress was determined that pressure be applied against Libya. The Congress accepted the measure recommended by Charles Percy and it was signed as a part of Foreign Assistance Act in December 1981.³¹

Throughout December, the Reagan administration considered what sanctions to apply against Libya. Officials were said to be considering a range of options, from more than rhetoric to a demand for Americans to leave Libya and a boycott of Libyan oil. But imposition of boycott could not be successful unless it was worldwide. The United States allies wanted the Libyan terrorist activities to cease as badly as Americans. But they were

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid, vol.40, no.12, March 20, 1982, p. 649.

unwilling to cooperate with the United States. With this regard because they needed Libyan oil and better relations with the Arab world.

After consultation with the Congress, President Reagan then decided to prohibit imports from Libya into the United States and to ban selected exports of US origin items. This ban was imposed on Libya in March 1982. President Reagan stated while announcing the ban:

We are taking these measures in response to a continuing pattern of Libyan activity which violates accepted international norms of behaviour. We have no evidence of a significant lasting change in Libyan behaviour, Libyan efforts to destabilize US regional friends have continued. Accordingly, the administration had decided that further measures are appropriate at this time to underline our seriousness of purpose and reassure those threatened by Libya. (32)

An analyst summed up the specific measures as follows:

(1) Prohibiting imports of Libyan Crude oil. This ended the United States reliance on Libya to meet a large part of its requirement of crude oil. It cut off the flow of American dollars to Libya. (2) It required validated licenses for all U.S. exports to Libya, except for food

32 Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents,
vol.18, no.10, March 15, 1982, p. 68.

and other agriculture products, medicines and medical supplies. (3) Denial of licenses for the export to Libya on the commodity control list for national security purposes under this policy. American exporters were banned from selling dual use hi-technology items to Libya. (4) Denial of licenses for export of U.S. origin oil and gas technology and equipment that is not readily available outside.³³

President Reagan clarified that these proposed measures might have only limited economic impact on Libya and felt that they were absolutely essential to compliment other measures for dealing with this problem. Such as "support to regional states and efforts to reduce the underlying instability which Libya exploits".³⁴

The U.S. economic embargo was imposed at a time when the United States oil imports from Libya were lowest. Therefore it did affect the oil consumption of the United States because it could get oil from other sources because of the oil glut. As a result of the embargo the United States and Libyan trade relations

33 Richard Deutsch, "Dealing With Qadhafi", Africa Report, vol.27, March/April 1982, p. 48.

34 New York Times, March 12, 1982, p.10.

in 1982 reached its lowest level since the Libyan revolution in September 1969.

If it had been hoped that the economic embargo would bring about the change in Libyan behaviour that hope turned out to be misplaced. It did not result in any change in Libyan behaviour nor did it create any major economic problems for Libya. Only U.S. oil companies suffered because of the loss in business. The profits went to West European countries to whom Libya gave its business. The Reagan administration urged its West European allies to support wider economic sanctions but they declined to support the United States.

In the autumn of 1982, the United States tried to pressurize African leaders asking them not to attend the 1982, Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit meeting in Tripoli.³⁵ The intended goal was to deprive Libya the opportunity of the spokesman for the continent. George Bush, who was then the Vice-President in the Reagan administration toured Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia in support of the American objective. As a result of the American pressure which was supported by Egypt and Sudan, the meeting of OAU was moved to

35 Ibid, August 17, 1982, p.4.

Ethiopia and large number of these countries of North Africa broke diplomatic relations with Libya. Similarly the United States asked its NATO allies not to permit the state visits by Qadhafi. American policy however did not succeed in case of West-European countries. Countries like Greece and Austria did not agree. Only Italy agreed and cancelled the scheduled visit by Qadhafi.

On November 23, 1981, news of a bizarre plot surfaced. It was suggested that the secret service knew and had warned the administration that Libya had plotted the assassination of President Reagan, Vice-President George Bush and two top cabinet members.³⁶ Whether this story had any bases in fact or not can not be known at this stage. However, it was reported that the White House increased its security and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and border patrols were dispatched on a nationwide hunt for the Libyan "hit squads". Libya of course denied these wild stories. The accusations and counter-accusations flew back and forth between the two capitals. The incident captured

36 New York Times, November 23, 1981, p.1.

headlines and remained a focus on national T.V. for weeks. President Reagan again however insisted that the reports were true. At a news conference on December 17, 1981, stated, "Our information and this entire matter has come from not one but several wide spread sources, and we have complete confidence in it and the threat was real".³⁷ By mid January 1982, the alleged attempt to kill President Reagan was reported to have eased. The Reagan administration continued to exert pressure against Libya, but the movements of the Libyan diplomats rose to the United Nations were curtailed under the "toughest regulation applied to any government delegation".

Impositions of Further Economic Sanctions:

On December 27, 1985, there were terrorist attacks on international airports in Rome and Vienna. At the checkin counters of the Israeli Airline El-Al at Rome and Vienna airport, terrorist attacks launched killing nineteen persons including five Americans. More than hundred were wounded in these incidents. Italians and

37 Department of State Bulletin, vol.82, January 1982, p.11.

Austrian officials traced the attacks to a renegade Palestinian factions headed by Abu-Nidal.³⁸ The United States officials charged that the Nidal group operated out of Libya, and had the encouragement and support of Qadhafi. But Libya denied these charges.

The tension over the incident steeply mounted. There were strong rumours that the United States was planning a military strike at Libya or at least at Palestinian guerrilla camps there. It was also reported that the United States naval and air forces in the Mediterranean Sea were placed under alert in the first week-end of January 1986. The New York Times reported that the Reagan officials encouraged rumours of possible attack on Libya. But by January 6, 1986, it was clear that President Reagan would not go in for military measures, but would settle for economic response. There were two reasons for the hesitation in taking military steps. First, there were at least one thousand U.S. citizens still in Libya. And if the United States took any military actions against Libya these citizens would have become hostages. The second difficulty arose out of the illusive nature of the Abu Nidal forces, it

38 New York Times, 28 December, 1985, p.1.

was not known where exactly these forces were located at any given time. Therefore on 7 January, 1986, President Reagan threatened to impose further economic sanctions against Libya.³⁹ He asked other nations to join the United States in denying Libya the normal economic and diplomatic privileges of the civilized world. Again the European countries declined to line up behind the United States, the West German government announced in January 1986, that it would not join in imposing sanctions. Spokesman of other European countries also reiterated their doubts that economic embargoes would deter terrorism. Nevertheless, the White House spokesman Larry Speakes insisted that the United States was pleased by the private response of some allied leaders.

If support from the allies for action against Libya was somewhat lukewarm. The President's actions won enthusiastic endorsement from the members of Congress, many of whom had called for vigorous move against Libya since long. Richard G. Lugar (R.-Ind.), Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee characterized the embargo as "an important first step",⁴⁰

39 Ibid, 7 January 1986, p.1.

40 Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, vol.44, no.2, January 11, 1986, p.59.

but warned that it would be effective only if it was backed by other countries. Senator Howard M. Metzenbaum (D.-Ohio), suggested that assassination be considered if Qadhafi was, "a party to killing innocent Americans, innocent people from all over the world".⁴¹ Congress was ready for a full scale sanctions against Libya. In the fiscal year 1986-87 foreign aid authorizations bill (PL 99-83), it authorized to ban all trade with Libya.⁴² That provision was based on the amendments to the aid bill offered in the Senate by Arlen Specter (R.-Pa.), and in the House by John R. Miller (R.-Wash.), and Benjamin A. Gilman (R.-N.Y.), Reagan cited this provision as one legal justification. He also acted under a 1977 law (PL 95-223) allowing to bar economic activity to other countries by declaring a national emergency with other countries.⁴³

On January 7, 1986, Reagan declared an emergency. He said that Libya's actions "constitute an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security and

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.

43 Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents,
vol.22, no.2, January 13, 1986, p.21.

foreign policy of the United States".⁴⁴ He imposed two sanctions by Executive Order 12543: a ban on all new loans or extensions of credit to the Libyan government, and a ban on travel to or from Libya, except for trips necessary to wind up activities within Libya by February 1, 1986. He also made effective four sanctions from February 1, 1986: (1) A ban on imports into the United States from Libya and exports to Libya from the United States except for publications, news materials and humanitarian donations such as food and clothing. (2) A ban on all transactions in Libya by U.S. citizens and companies. (3) A ban on the purchase of goods for export from Libya to any country. (4) A ban on the performance of contracts in Libya, or any other transactions relating to Libya, except for journalistic activity.⁴⁵

Among other things the sanctions could result in thirtyfive U.S. corporations primarily oil firms to stop work in Libya. The service contracts under which these countries worked remained unaffected despite previous bans on imports of Libyan petroleum products into the United States. It was estimated by the

44 Ibid, p.22.

45 Ibid, pp. 19-20.

administration officials that the latest sanctions would force most Americans in Libya to leave the country because it would be illegal to spend money over there. According to the laws prevailing in the United States, violation of sanctions is a felony punishable by upto ten years in prison or a fine of fifty thousand dollars.⁴⁶ The sanctions were applicable to American citizens and corporations but not to foreign subsidiaries of American firms. Officials gradually considered that the sanctions would have limited impact on Libya unless other countries joined.

Libya protested against the United States measures and on January 8, 1986, denounced the imposition of sanctions as "tantamount to a declaration of war".⁴⁷ Other international reactions to the United States measures were mixed. Few countries criticized the sanctions and supported Libya. Among them was Soviet Union which stressed that Libya would receive Soviet support "in every respect against such crude, imperialist pressure from the United States".⁴⁸ Others were the

46 Department of State Bulletin, vol.86, March 1986, p. 36.

47 Keesings Contemporary Archives (London), vol.XXXII, no.3, March 1986, pp.34262-63.

48 Ibid.

Abu Nidal group which warned of reprisals against the United States and Israel, and in the annual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Conference Organization on January 7, 1986, condemned "the aggressive escalation and constant provocations on the part of international imperialism and the Zionist entity", (i.e. Israel).⁴⁹ On January 9, 1986, the meeting passed a resolution condemning U.S. sanctions against Libya and urged Islamic countries to "take the necessary actions" to counter them.⁵⁰

Some countries also supported the United States sanctions against Libya. Among them were Israel, Canada, Australia. The government of Israel welcomed the United States move, but stressed that European countries would have to follow suit to make the sanctions effective, pointing out that seventyfive per cent of Libya's oil exports were purchased by European states. Bill Hayden, the Australian Foreign Minister assured that the Australian government would probably follow the United States lead, while the Canadian government on January 12, 1986, introduced limited sanctions primarily involving a ban

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

on the export of high technology oil drilling equipment and on government assistance to Canadian companies trading with Libya.⁵¹

European reaction however, was generally negative. A United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesman stated that, "experience shows that sanctions regardless of who imposes them, have never had the desired result and have often produced the opposite effects".⁵² On January 10, 1986, Margaret Thatcher, the former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, also criticized the United States for considering military action, stating that she "did not believe in retaliatory strikes that are against international law".⁵³ Helmut Kohl, the West German Federal Chancellor, referred to concern for the safety of West Germans residents in Libya, when he stated that, "his government would not impose sanctions".⁵⁴ The French Prime Minister, M. Laurent Fabius, expressed scepticism as to the effects of sanctions, while a spokesman for the Spanish Foreign Ministry, commented that, "we do not think this is a good way of proceeding".⁵⁵

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

On January 9, 1986, Signor Andreotti, Italian Foreign Minister, said that "Italy would place a ban on arms sales to Libya and would refrain from taking commercial advantage of the United States sanctions".⁵⁶ The Japanese International Trade and Industry Ministry, on January 9, 1986, also instructed Japanese firms not to exploit opportunities resulting from the withdrawal of U.S. companies.

Second Incident At The Gulf Of Sirte:

The escalating conflict between the United States and Libya reached yet another higher stage as a result of clash in the Gulf of Sirte on March 24-25, 1986. It may be recalled here that Libya had challenged the two American airplanes in the same region, while they were carrying on naval exercises, as a result two Libyan fighter bombers had been shot down by the American bomber planes. In the event in March, Libya again attacked U.S. planes flying in exercises over the Gulf of Sirte. The United States retaliated by destroying two Libyan ships. As noted earlier in October 1973, Libya claimed 150,000 square miles of the Gulf of Sidra, south of 32 degrees 30 minutes north latitude as its territorial waters.

56 Ibid.

Measured across that line, the Gulf is about 275 miles wide. The declared boundary is roughly 90-150 miles north of the Libyan coast.⁵⁷ The United States and most other Western countries generally do not recognize claims of territorial waters running more than 12 miles from land.

From 1981 through 1986 January, U.S. naval forces carried on exercises near Libya on eighteen occasions. Seven of these were carried on inside what Libya called "the line of death". By March, there was unusually heavy concentration of U.S. warships in the Mediterranean. The U.S. carriers *Coral Sea* and *Saratoga* which had maneuvered near Libya in January, had remained on station, when another carrier *America* and its escorts arrived from the United States. According to a source in Defense Department, there were thirty ships carrying nearly twenty-six thousand men, who were participating in the March exercises. These were all part of the Sixth fleet task force. Carriers *Saratoga* and *America* each carrying eighty planes and the *Coral Sea* with sixtyfour planes, were the core of the force. The carriers were accompanied by twentythree warships and four supply vessels.⁵⁸

57 Michael Rubner, "Anti-terrorism and the Withering of the 1973 War Powers Resolution", Political Science Quarterly, vol.102, Summer 1987, p.193.

58 New York Times, March 26, 1986, p.1.

Libya had more than five hundred combat aircraft, mostly built in Soviet Union. Most of these were older models and could not be expected to do well in combat with the United States forces. On March 21, 1986, an official notice was given^{to}/U.S. Planes to conduct exercises from 21 March to 1 April, 1986, in an area that included the Gulf of Sidra.⁵⁹

The three carriers and most of their escorts remained well to the north of the Gulf. But on March 24, planes from the carriers began flying the first of 375 flights over the Gulf, and three ships, led by the Aegis cruiser Tisconderoga, moved south of the border claimed by Libya, where they were to remain for the next seventyfive hours. According to the Pentagon, the United States cleared the territorial waters of Libya as recognized by the United States i.e. twelve miles from the coast. It can not however may be doubted that the entire exercise had been taken with a view to contest the will of Libya. The United States could have easily avoided the possible conflict but the Reagan administration was not interested in doing so.

59 Department of State Bulletin, vol.86, April 1986, p.20.

The results were not much different from what the Reagan administration could have expected. In the course of that day, at least four SA-5s and one shorter range anti-aircraft missile were fired at U.S. planes over the Gulf from batteries near Sirte. Libya claimed that it shot down three planes on that day, but Pentagon claimed no U.S. losses. At about 9 p.m. on that day, two HARM missiles were fired at an anti-aircraft radar. As a result the radar signals stopped about six hours later the radar was again turned on, the United States launched two more HARM missiles which again went out there. The radar was not attacked again because it did not pose threat to the United States. In the meanwhile U.S. ships began attacking some of the Libya's war ships armed with missiles that were considered as a threat to the United States fleet. The Pentagon sources later on stated that five Libyan ships were attacked and two of the Libyan aircrafts were sunk. Libyan units remaining within twelve miles of the coast were not attacked. No further engagement took place on March 25-26, 1986.⁶⁰ On 27 March, the United States announced that the exercise was being ended,

60 Facts on File, vol.46, no.2366, March 28, 1986, pp.201-203.

though many of the ships would remain in the central Mediterranean. While the U.S. forces neither sustained any casualties, this inflicted heavy toll on Libyans, thirty eight Libyan sailors were killed in this confrontation.⁶¹

The operation code named 'Prairie Fire' was even a more grand success domestically. It won widespread support from the Congress and the public. However, the United States action was praised by Israel and the United Kingdom. Other European countries expressed varying degrees of concern, and the United States was strongly criticized by the Soviet Union, and by Arab states. The French, Spanish, West German governments, together with Japan, urged restraint while acknowledging the United States right to self defense when attacked in international waters. Signor Bentino Craxi, the Italian Prime Minister, said that the United States action was not an "appropriate" way in which to resolve a dispute over territorial waters and warned that armed confrontation in the region was of high risk and great concern to Italy, which does not want a war on its doorsteps".⁶²

61 New York Times, 28 March 1986, p.1.

62 Keesings Contemporary Archives, vol.xxxii, no.6, June 1986, p. 34455.

The Greek government warned that "provocations and conflict are a danger to peace". The Soviet Union government described the U.S. exercises as "deliberate actions taken in order to destabilize the situation in the region", and also warned that they had "poisoned the atmosphere" of good bilateral relations between the super powers.⁶³ Among Arab states expressing strong support for Libya were Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Iran. King Fahd Ibn Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arab, reportedly offered to place all of Saudi Arabia's "resources at the disposal of the Libyan people".⁶⁴ The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) similarly expressed support for Libya, while the militant Palestinian Abu Nidal group threatened to mount revenge raids against U.S. targets all over the world. President Mubarak of Egypt, which had had very poor relations with Libya avoided out-right condemnation of the United States action, instead urged restraint on both sides. A meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Arab League, convened in Tunis on March 27, 1986, at Libya's request, condemned the United States actions, but rejected Libyan demands that member countries should sever diplomatic relations with the United States and impose an economic boycott on U.S. goods. The United

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

Nations Security Council discussed the action on March 26-31, 1986, but adjourned without passing a resolution.⁶⁵ The Reagan administration publicly claimed that the U.S. exercises had only been meant to contest Libya's claim that the entire Gulf of Sidra was Libyan territorial waters, instead of the twelve mile limit recognized by the U.S. and most other nations. Privately, American officials said that the operations were intended to demonstrate U.S. willingness to use force to punish Libya for its terrorist activities.

The use of force by the Reagan administration raised a constitutional issue. The War Power Act of 1973 authorized the President to inform the Congress in writing about the use of force within forty eight hours. There is no evidence that the Reagan administration made any effort to solicit congressional advice and opinions prior to the deployment of troops in the Gulf of Sidra. According to one report, following a National Security Council meeting on 14 March 1986, in which the decision to proceed with 'Prairie Fire' was taken, National Security Adviser John Point Dexter, had been asked to brief congressional leaders on the

65 Ibid.

impending operations but he failed to do so. The eventual briefing took place on 24 March 1986, after the initial wave of attacks had taken place. It was only then that House Speaker Thomas O'Neil, Jr., (D.-Mass.), House Minority Leader Robert H. Michael (R.-Ill.), Senate Minority Leader Robert C. Byrd (D.-W.Va.), and Senate President protempore Strom Thurmond (R.-S.C.) were summoned to the White House to be informed of the latest developments.

The secret planning to engage Libyan forces in the Gulf of Sidra began in early January 1986, after the American intelligence agencies had uncovered indirect links between Libya and the terrorist massacres at the Rome and Vienna airports that took place in December 1985. A revised plan was presented to the President Reagan at a meeting of National Security Council (NSC) on 14 March 1986, and was approved by him. Those who were present in the meeting (the President, Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, Secretary of State George P. Shultz, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William J. Crowe, Jr., and National Security Adviser John M. Pointdexter) anticipated the possibility of military engagement. Much of the discussions centered around proposed rules of engagement and strategies for military retaliation. Members of

Congress with a few notable exceptions, also endorsed the decision to challenge Libya. Thomas P. O'Neill Jr., (D.-Mass.), Speaker of the House of Representatives stated that, "the administration's handling of this matter is on the right course. Its actions in protecting America's armed forces in international waters are justified".⁶⁶ Two prominent Democrats raised the issue of noncompliance by a President of the 1973 War Powers Resolution (PL 93-148). In a letter to the President on March 24, 1986, Dante B. Fascell (D.-Flo.), Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, charged that the administration had failed the resolutions requirement of the prior consultation with the Congress. Sam Nunn (D.-Ga.), member of the Senate Armed Services Committee agreed with Fascell's contention. On March 26, 1986, Reagan sent letters to O'Neill and to Senate president pro tempore Strom Thurmond (R.-S.C.), containing all information required by the resolution. Reagan said in his letter that, "the deployment of these U.S. armed forces and the measures taken by them in self defense during this incident were undertaken pursuant to authority under the Constitution, including my authority

66 Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, vol.44, no.13, March 29, 1986, p. 699.

as Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Armed Forces".⁶⁷ Defense Secretary Casper W. Weinberger, Secretary of State George P. Shultz insisted that the naval maneuvers were designed only to assert freedom of navigation in the Gulf of Sidra.⁶⁸ White House spokesman Larry Speaker, insisted on March 24 :

This was not an act designed to provoke a response or to humiliate Qadhafi. The exercise was one among many in support of the traditional maritime rights which, if we do not assert from time to time, tend to be eroded and encroached upon. (69)

According to the Pentagon, the Sixth Fleet's challenge to Libya's claim on the Gulf was simply one more in a routine series of exercises designed to challenge territorial claims the United States does not recognize.

The United States does not go out every day contesting the claims of other states regarding their territorial sea. Had this not been the case of Libya the United States would have certainly resorted to other means, the subsequent explanations provided by the administration were cover for its provocative action.

67 Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, vol.22, no.13, March 31, 1986, p. 423.

68 New York Times, March 30, 1986, p.6.

69 Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, vol.44, no.13, March 29, 1986, p.699.

Attack On Libya:

The Reagan administration's determination to teach Qadhafi a lesson if he did not desist from supporting terrorist activities did not end, with the military engagement in the Gulf of Sidra on 25 March 1986. A terrorist bomb exploded in La Belle discotheque in West Berlin on 5 April, 1986, which was frequented by American servicemen, and an American Sgt. Kenneth Ford and a young Turkish woman were killed, and 230 others were injured, among them were some fifty American military personnel.⁷⁰ Within days after the U.S. intelligence agencies had secured substantial evidence of direct Libyan involvement in the 5 April incident and reports that Libya had deployed its agent around the world for terrorist attacks against thirty U.S. embassies. The United States decided to use force against Libya once again. The United States planned Operation 'El Dorado Canyon' against Libya on April 14, 1986. F-111 bombers, radar jamming planes and refueling tankers took off from four bases in United Kingdom. The planes detoured around Spain, adding 2,400 miles to round the trip. France refused to allow the U.S. planes to fly

70 New York Times, 6 April 1986, p.1.

over its territory. In the Mediterranean north of Libya, A-6E Navy bombers left the carriers America and Coral Sea on April 15. The American bombers struck Libya at 2.00 a.m. on the same day. The attack was conducted in darkness to provide aided protection to the United States pilots. As it was known that the Libyan airforce did not have capability of mounting successfully night operations. The Defense Department said it used both Air Force and Navy bombers because the two carrier fleet near Libya did not have enough specialized strike aircraft to attack all five Libyan targets simultaneously.⁷¹

The main attacks began with thirteen F-111s striking three targets in and around Tripoli and Benghazi. Aziziyah barracks which the Pentagon described as the command and control headquarters for Libyan terrorism. It also was one of the several sites used as a residence by Qadhafi. And military facilities at Tripoli's main airport, where three to five Soviet built Illyushin-76 jet transport planes were also destroyed. The Sidi Bilal base, which the

71 Frederick Jr. Zilian, "The US Raid On Libya", Orbis, vol.30, Fall 1986, pp. 499-524.

administration said was used to train terrorists in underwater sabotage was also attacked. A dozen A-6Es attacked two sites in Benghazi, they were, Jamahiriya military barracks and Benina air base. The French Embassy in Tripoli and several neighbouring residential buildings also were hit, according to the Pentagon. The Libyan government claimed, that the raids killed dozens of people, mostly civilians in the residential area of Bin Ashur in Tripoli and among those killed included Qadhafi's adopted infant daughter.⁷²

In an address to the nation on 14 April 1986, President Reagan justified the attack in the following words:

When our citizens are abused or attacked any where in the world on the direct orders of a hostile regime, we will respond so long as I am in this Oval Office. Self defense is not only our right, it is our duty. It is the purpose behind the mission undertaken tonight- a mission fully consistent with Article 51 of of the UN Charter.(73)

Another White House statement on the same day claimed that the United States has chosen to exercise its right

72 Facts on File, vol.46, no.2369, April 18, 1986, p. 258.

73 Department of State Bulletin, vol.86, June 1986, p.2.

of self-defense against Libyan terrorism.⁷⁴ Secretary of State, George Shultz stated at a news conference that, "the action was proportionate to the sustained, clear, continuing and widespread use of terror against Americans and others by Qadhafi's Libya".⁷⁵

The Congress again asserted its right to be informed prior to the military action on 11 April, shortly before the Sixth fleet would increase by another carrier and following disclosures by administrations officials that they were considering plans for military retaliation against Libya. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard G. Lugar (R.-Ind.) sent a message to the Secretary of State George Shultz, urging him to consult with the Committee in accordance with the law. A similar request was transmitted to President Reagan by a group of members of the House of Representatives who were led by Mathew F. Mchugh (D.-N.Y.). On April 14, 1986, after the President had given final approval to the raid and four hour after the American planes had left the British base at Lakenheath for Libya,

74 Department of State Bulletin, vol.86, June 1986, p.3.

75 New York Times, 15 April 1986, p.1.

a bipartisan group of congressional leaders were summoned to the Oval Office for consultations with the President. They were Admiral William J. Crowe, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on plans for the Libyan operation, Secretary of State George Shultz, Treasury Secretary Baker, Deputy Defense Secretary Taft, Donald Fortier, Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, CIA Director Casey, Chief of Staff Reagan, Attorney General Meese and National Security Adviser, Pointdexter. The delegation also included Senators Robert Dale, Robert C. Byrd, Claiborne Pell, Richard G. Lugar, Sam Nunn and Strom Thurmond, and Representatives Dante B. Fascell, William S. Broomfield, Robert H. Michael, Les Aspin and William L. Dickinson.⁷⁶

Administration officials insisted that what had transpired at the 14 April meeting - an eleven hour briefing during which congressmen were placed under extreme pressure to give their agreement to a military action after operating deployments had already begun. Only satisfying the legal requirement that consultations with Congress occur prior to the introduction of troops into hostilities. It was also clear that the White House had ample time and opportunity to solicit congressional

76 National Journal (Washington D.C.), no.19, May 10, 1986, p. 1102.

advice long before the commencement of military actions against Libya.

As could be expected the American public strongly supported the raid. New York Times / CBS poll taken on 16 April 1986, after the attack discovered that seventy-seven percent of the respondent approved the raid and only fourteen per cent disapproved. The poll was based on survey of 704 persons. The poll also showed that the approval rating that the President of handling the foreign affairs had gone upto 76 per cent. Among those who approved the raid 30 per cent believed that it would reduce terrorism and 43 per cent believed that it would lead to more terrorism and that it might lead to war with Libya.⁷⁷

The reaction of the American media was also favourable thou it was cautious about the ramifications of the raid. The media was most concerned about the raid on Atlantic alliances and not so much on the Middle East. The Pittsburgh Press, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, The Billings Gazette, St. Paul Pioneer Press & Dispatch, The Honolulu Advertiser, Herald News, The Washington Post, The Sunday Record, Boston Sunday Globe, The Lincoln Journal, Chicago Tribune, The Philadelphia Inquirer,

77 New York Times, April 20, 1986, p.8.

The Burlington Free Press, Arkansas Gazette, The Blade, The Augusta Chronicle, Detroit Free Press, Los Angeles Times, the Miami Herald supported the raid in their editorials.

In contrast the West European countries did not react favourably to the American attack. A West German poll showed 75 per cent were opposed to the raid. A poll in the Britain for the Times showed only 29 per cent approved Reagan's raid. Harris and Gallup polls in France contradicted each other on the support for the raid, but both showed large majorities, approving the French denial of overflight rights to American war planes bound from England to Libya. There was at least one outcome of the raid which was highly satisfying to the Reagan administration. The intelligence agencies throughout the Western world were alerted to the danger Libya could pose. Since the raid, the Turks, Italians, Spanish and British have arrested Libyans and others for plotting terrorism and also expelled them for security risks. The reaction in Arab, African and Islamic countries was generally adverse. The Non-Aligned Movement condemned the attack as "blatant, unprovoked act of aggression". It sent a delegation to Libya on April 20 to demonstrate its support to Libya.

The OPEC member states also condemned the attack and rejected a Libyan demand for an immediate oil embargo against the United States. Although Libya denied that it had any hand in the bomb explosion in La Bell discotheque and claimed that the American attack was totally uncalled for. However, after the American raid the terrorist attacks in West European countries came down substantially.

The April raids did not have a significant impact on American-Libyan relations. After a period of seclusion, Qadhafi returned to the world stage with his radical, rejectionist policies wholly intact. The Reagan administration, on the other hand, stepped up its programme of diplomatic, economic and military pressure designed to precipitate the downfall of the Qadhafi regime. Hence, the foreign policy of the Reagan administration encouraged as well as discouraged the Libyan policies it was designed to check, since US foreign policy helped generate the international recognition craved by Qadhafi.

CONCLUSION

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Diplomatic relations between the United States and Libya were not good at any time after 1969. The two states held such diametrically opposite views on world issues in general and Middle Eastern questions in particular that there was little opportunity for a rapprochement to develop. Libyan leader Qadhafi was adamantly opposed to the international status-quo, while the United States was its primary proponent. When the Libyan government tied its bilateral relations with other states to their position on the Palestine issue, the United States was a target for special criticism. Moreover, what Libya saw as justifiable support for national liberation movements, the United States viewed as blatant interference in the domestic affairs of other states, if not active support for international terrorism. At the same time, the two countries were bound by a web of common economic interest that both were reluctant to forgo. Historically, the United States foreign policy in the Middle East aimed to protect the flow of oil to the United States economy and the economies of its Western allies on terms that maximized volume, minimized price and avoided interruptions of supply. Closely related to this objective, the United States sought to recycle as large a share

of petro-dollars as possible through the United States economy, largely in the form of US exports to the region. Libyan oil was especially prized, as it was high quality, low sulphur crude which was well suited to American refining needs. Consequently, a primary commercial objective of the United States throughout the 1970s was to preserve the dominant position of American oil companies in Libya. A secondary objective which grew from the presence of the oil companies was the obligation to safeguard the American community of several thousand people living and working in Libya. On its part, the Libyan government, in particular Qadhafi, desired continued access to American technology. Libyan cooperation with the private sector in the United States remained at a high level, despite the precarious nature of official relations. In large part because of this important economic relationship, initially the United States policy towards revolutionary Libya could be termed one of conciliation. As it had done with Egypt in the early days of Nasser's revolution, the United States government focused primarily on Libya's external orientation, as opposed to its internal evolution, and stressed the long-term compatibility of US-Libyan interests.

In any case, there was little evidence to support the conspiracy theories which surfaced later to suggest that the United States had installed Qadhafi in power and shielded him during the early years of the revolution. At most, the United States government, through its CIA, probably alerted the Libyan government on one or more occasions to potential coup attempts.

After 1972, United States policy moved from one of conciliation to one of constraint. With the withdrawal of the United States ambassador to Libya in 1972, diplomatic representation at the ambassador level ended. For the remainder of the decade, various American administrations did not show much interest in restoring good relations. On the contrary, they showed willingness to ignore it and some times to confront it. They imposed additional restraints on commercial dealings, in particular, blocking delivery of several million dollars worth of transport equipment deemed to have potential military uses; but the thrust of American policy in the region was to ignore Libya. The general feeling in Washington was that provoking Qadhafi or precipitating an economic or military showdown with Libya would run counter to the step-by-step peace process pursued by the United States in the region in 1973-75, as well as the Camp David diplomacy of the Carter administration later in the decade.

Not surprisingly, the United States policy of constraint in 1972-80 was largely a failure. Libya continued to oppose the chief Middle Eastern goals of the United States and opposed every US plan for an Arab-Israeli settlement; and as its relationship with Sadat deteriorated, Libya became the most shrill Arab critic of Egyptian peace initiatives. The Libyan government was a founding member of the Steadfastness and Confrontation Front. It subsidized radical Palestinian factions opposed to any form of peace settlement with Israel. Libyan purchases of Soviet weapons continued and during periods of regional tension, Libya could be counted on to urge Arab oil producers to use the oil weapon against the United States.

During the Carter administration, bilateral diplomatic relations became increasingly strained. This was especially true after the Libyan government did little to protect the United States embassy in Tripoli when it was stormed by Libyan students in the early days of the hostage crisis in Iran. Concerned for their safety, the United States had recalled all its diplomatic personnel from Libya by May 1980. At the same time, reports increased of Qadhafi agents planning to assassinate Libyan dissidents outside Libya, including some residing in the United States.

In early 1980, Libya was linked to an abortive coup in Tunisia which was launched from the southern mining town of Gafsa. The United States responded to the incident with an emergency shipment of military equipment to Tunisia. Thereafter the threat of Libyan intervention continued, especially in countries with close political ties to the United States. Nevertheless both governments still seemed willing to co-exist with a mutually unsatisfactory diplomatic relationship which neither was able to improve but both were unwilling to rupture, in part because of the economic considerations referred earlier.

The Reagan administration came into office determined to take a new and apparently more consistent position towards Libya. Qadhafi was selected for special attention by the United States as the symbol of all the United States finds repugnant in international affairs; support for international terrorism, opposition to a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and support for a diminished US role in the world. The administration argued that its new policy demonstrated that the United States would not tolerate lawlessness in the international arena. The relatively high profile the Libyan issue was accorded by American officials

was designed to suggest the increased resolve of the Reagan administration not to tolerate what it viewed as repugnant behaviour, particularly from Third World countries. Beyond the symbolic utility of acting upon "moral outrage" in relations with government like Qadhafi's, the Administration hoped to modify Qadhafi's behaviour. This would have presumably served two purposes to correct the behaviour itself, and to demonstrate the power of the United States to accomplish such a change in another country's policies. The seriousness with which this goal was taken may be indicated by President Reagan's own suggestion that the United States would have liked to see Qadhafi out of power if he was not willing to accommodate American demands.

Libya appeared to be an appropriate focus for the Administration's attention. It is not a particularly strong or import^{ant}/country, its high visibility being entirely a function of its strategic position and its oil reserves and hence it was an easy target for American opposition. It had close ties with the Soviet Union and therefore any change in Libyan policies could have been interpreted as a loss for the Soviets. Insofar as Qadhafi's policies did constitute a threat to pro-Western government in Africa and the Arab world, and to Western

interests in the Middle East and Mediterranean, American opposition to his government was thought to illustrate the administrations interest in being a reliable friend and ally.

So one may conclude that the U.S. conduct between 1969 and 1974, when Libya's actions and statements were very antagonistic toward the USSR, its behaviour was satisfactory enough to U.S. decision makers to enable them to attempt a rapprochement towards the revolutionary regime, despite its hostility to other U.S. goals in the Middle East. Although Libya's conduct related to Western access to oil, relations with Israel, and its revolutionary activities abroad remained the same as in the earlier period of 1969-1974. Libya changed from being highly hostile towards the Soviet Union to a more moderate policy, as reflected in the rapprochement of May 1974. This caused the change in the U.S. policy towards Libya, during 1974-76. During the period of 1977-80, a pre-established stereotype image of Libya as a country sponsoring terrorism determined U.S. conduct towards Libya. When the Carter administration came to grips with the reality of Libyan conduct as regards terrorism, they followed a less hostile policy, and relations between the two countries, began to flourish in 1978-79, despite Libya's friendship with the

Soviets. In late 1979 and 1980, the picture was a little different. The USSR's conduct in Afghanistan, the increased influence of the Brzezinski group on U.S. decision-making in addition to Libya's annoying interference in American politics (the Billy Carter Affair), all these circumstances led to a tougher approach toward Libya.

During the Reagan administration between 1981-1988, the Soviet threat was felt to be greater than at any other period. This affected the Reagan administration's entire analysis of world politics. Libya was viewed as a proxy of the Soviet Union and as part of a Soviet-run "terrorist network", consequently, Libya was used by the U.S. government as a battleground on which to display its confrontational approach towards the USSR. And the U.S. policy of intervention and pressure against Libya was not only to punish Libya for "lawless" activities, but also to demonstrate to the Soviet Union that the new administration was determined to close down the "window of vulnerability that had existed in the past".¹

Comparatively, the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations all adopted different approaches to Libya, and all different from the Reagan administration's approach.

1 New York Times, August 20, 1981, p.3.

The first three administrations used a dual track policy, on the one hand, hostile rhetoric mixed with some marginal pressure, political and military; on the other hand, growing trade relations because of pragmatic economic considerations. But the Reagan administration regarded the Libyan threat as intense, and it rejected the dual-track approach as "financing Libya's adventurism". Therefore, U.S. policy towards Libya is an indispensable part of a general pattern of conduct aimed at rolling back what are perceived to be spots of Soviet influence all over the world. Tensions in U.S.-Libyan relations will continue so long as the dominant concern for the United States is the strategic contest with the Soviets and as Libya's relations with the Soviet Union grow stronger. Thus, the core concern for U.S. policy during the 1969-1988 towards Libya centered on combating the Soviet Union.

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