

**RUSSIA'S POLICY TOWARDS ARAB-ISRAEL
CONFLICT, 1991-2005**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the Dissertation entitled "RUSSIA'S POLICY TOWARDS ARAB-ISRAEL CONFLICT, 1991-2005" submitted by me for the award of the degree of the **Master of Philosophy** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

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

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DEDICATED
TO
MY PARENTS



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PREFACE

The present –day Russia played a pivotal role in the geo-political development of the West Asian region especially since 1948, when the modern state of Israel came into existence. Apart from Israel with which it has deep-rooted cultural connections in the form of Jews Diasporas, is also heavily involved in the energy politics of this region. During the cold war period, the Arab-Israel conflict was the focal point of between the then two superpowers- the Soviet Union and the US. Initially, the then Soviet Union supported Israel against western-oriented Arab countries. However due to strategic realignment it took the side of Arab world. The present study is looking at these aspects in the post-Soviet phase, as how far Russia is able to maintain its effective dominance in the West Asian politics.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991 changed the geopolitical situation in the West Asia. The fall of the major patron of the Arab sides affected the Arab position against Israel. At the same time, the attitudes of the Arab countries towards Israel's existence had also been changed. These situations led to the signing of several peace treaties between Israel and Arab countries, collectively and individually.

I have divided my dissertation into five chapters. In the first chapter, I covered the cold war period and discussed the Soviet Union's policy towards Arab-Israel conflict until 1991 when Soviet Union collapsed.

In the second chapter, I have covered the Yeltsin period briefly and focused on Russia's role and influence in the Arab-Israeli peace process. The Yeltsin period was divided into two parts- first, when Andrei Kozyrev was the foreign minister from 1991 to January 1996. The Kozyrev pursued the pro-western policy and ignored the Arabs concerns. The second period started from the January 1996 when Kozyrev was replaced by the hard-liner Yevgeny Primakov. Primakov pursued pro-Arab policy and increase Russia's presence in the West Asian region.

In the third chapter, I have focused on the Putin's policy towards West Asia region, particularly towards Arab-Israel conflict. This chapter has covered the changing policy of Russia and the US in the light of 9/11 terror attack at Washington. The role of four major players namely the Russia, the US, the EU and the UN on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been discussed briefly in this chapter.

Fourth chapter discusses the role of three regional and external players namely the EU, Turkey and Iran in the Arab-Israel conflict in Russian perspective.

The final chapter summarises the findings.

Abbreviations

BTC	-	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan
CFE	-	Conventional Forces in Europe
CFSP	-	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CPSU	-	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCE	-	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
EC	-	European Community
EEC	-	European Economic Community
EU	-	European Union
FSR	-	Former Soviet Republics
GCC	-	Gulf Cooperation Council
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PA	-	Palestinian Authority
PLO	-	Palestine Liberation Organization
START	-	Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
UAE	-	United Arab Emirates
UN	-	United Nations
US	-	United States
USSR	-	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Chapter I

Introduction and Research Design

Introduction:

In December 1991, the Soviet Union disintegrated and split into fifteen independent states. Russian federation became successor states of the Union on world stage. The Russian federation is very much different from the former Soviet Union. It is smaller in both in terms of territory and population. The new state- Russia underwent a quiet revolution in political and economic sphere. Unlike Soviet Union, Russia adopted democracy in the political sphere and walk on the market economy path. These differences have to keep in mind to understand Russian foreign policy towards the West Asian region. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Russia is not a military superpower like Soviet Union. This prevents Russia to pursue a more assertive foreign policy towards the Arab- Israel conflicts in the West Asian region. Russia's domestic compulsions like managing its Muslim population and radical problems in the North Caucasus on the one hand, and regained good relations with the Israeli Jews, who migrated from Russia on the other hand, prompted Russia to pursue a balanced policy towards the Arab- Israel conflict.

Russian foreign policy under Yeltsin changed dramatically and he adopted just opposite to the earlier foreign policy of the Soviet Union. The Yeltsin government adopted pro-western policy and walked in the shadow of the US in the West Asia as well as other parts of the world. Yeltsin even did not feel the necessity of attending the multilateral peace talks between Arabs and Israelis that were held in Moscow in January 1992 (Khashan 1999: 24). Although Russia was the part of Oslo peace accords (1993 and 1995), but its role was secondary to the United States. The growing opposition to Yeltsin's pro-western policies in Russia's Duma, forced him to change the pro-western foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev and replaced him by Yevgeny Primakov. The appointment of Yevgeni Primakov as foreign minister in 1996 has accelerated the pace of Moscow's return to the Middle Eastern region. Primakov played an important role in laying the foundations of Russia's policy towards the West Asian region. He has often stated that Russia must constitute an alternative to the US in this region. Thus, during the

spring 1996 fighting in Lebanon between Israel and Hezbollah, Primakov and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres took a hostile position. (Freedman 2010: 51-52) His priorities were to strengthen trends for integrating the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) under Russian auspices and to obtain an equal partnership with the US in the Arab- Israel peace process. He pursued a colder policy towards Israel and also strengthened ties with Moscow's former Arab friends such as Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. Primakov has openly said that he intends to confront Washington with a demand for equal partnership by strengthening Moscow's ties in West Asia and not follow the earlier policy of cooperation with Washington. (Blank 1996: 518)

The rise of Putin as Russian President strengthened Russia's involvement in the Middle Eastern region. Vladimir Putin pursued a balanced policy towards this region and developed friendly relations with both Arab countries and Israel also. Putin also developed good relations with militants Islamist movements- Hamas and Hezbollah. He made official visit to different Arab countries and Israel too. He visited Egypt in 2005, Jordan in 2007, and Israel in 2005. Russia, under Putin, is also playing a major role in the Arab- Israeli peace process. With UN, the US and European Union, Russia is a part of Quartet on the Middle East, a road map for peace. In March 2002, Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov confirmed that Russian policy was acting in coordination with the US, the EU, and the UN aiming at stepping up efforts to overcome the Israeli- Palestinian confrontation and resuming the progress towards an all-inclusive Arab- Israeli settlement based on the Madrid conference of 1991 and UN Security Council resolutions. (Smith 2002: 2)

Historical background:

The present Arab- Israel conflict has its roots in the 30 years from 1918 to 1948 when Palestine was under the British rule. In the First World War, the Ottoman Empire defeated badly by the allied powers and lost its huge territory to the victorious Britain and

France, which divided it in the spheres of influence in Sykes-Picot Agreement which was held in April 1916. During the First World War, the Britain made various promises to various groups with the aim of to get help in the war against central powers. To get the support of Jews in the war, the British government promised them to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine by a declaration, which is famously known as Balfour declaration of 1917. (Bickerton 2009: 51-56)

On the other hand, it also promised Sharif Hussein, who was the ruler of the Muslim holy city of Mecca, that Britain would grant independence to most Arab areas of the Ottoman Empire if Arab would help Britain against Turks in the war. In other words, to get the support of both Jews and Arabs in the war, Britain made incompatible promises to both Jews and Arabs. But after the war, Britain walked away from her promises and ruled there as colonial power. The League of Nations divided ottoman lands, which was defeated in the war, between the Britain and the France after First World War. Britain was given the Palestine mandate on land comprising modern-day Israel, the west bank, Gaza Strip and Jordan and ruled there like an imperial power. Britain disposed of land, established borders and installed rulers without any regard for the ethnic or religious composition of the inhabitants. (Slantchev 2009: 2)

Initially, Britain encouraged emigration of European Jews to Palestine. The influx of Jews to the Palestine annoyed Arabs and they attacks on Jews. The series of attacks of Arabs on Jews finally forced the Jews to form the *Haganah* (defense), the precursor of the Israel defense forces (the army). In the 1920s, the Arabs attacked several times on Jews, including the most famous massacre at Hebron in 1929 in 1937, the British Peel commission proposed a partition for the creation of the Jewish state on about 20% of the area of Palestine. The partition plan was rejected by the both sides and it provoked an Arab revolt and an outbreak of terrorist campaigns on both sides, forced the Britain to adjourn the proposal plan. Because of violence and terrorist campaigns, the British decided to relinquish their promise to the Jews and began restricting immigration of Jews to the Palestine in the 1930s. In the infamous McDonald white paper of 1939, the Britain

abandoned the idea of a Jewish state, restricted Jewish immigration and limited the amount of land that Jewish could purchase in that region. (ibid: 3)

In the 1939, the Second World War started and which resulted in the genocide of approximately six million Jews by the state sponsored murder by the Nazi Germany led by Adolf Hitler during the Second World War. After Second World War (1939-1945) the British soon realized that their global empire was no longer tenable and that the mandate in Palestine was not workable. (Bickerton 2009: 64-65) In 1947, in the midst of growing tensions between Arabs, Jews and the British, Britain announced its plan to pull out of the region and Britain turned the question of Palestine to the United Nations. In November 1947, United Nations General Assembly voted for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state with Jerusalem being placed under international regime. Jews accepted the partition plan but Arabs rejected it and attacked on Jewish state. In May 1948, the Jewish state announced independence named Israel. But the Arab states attacked the new state from all sides that were not ready to accept the UN partition plan, which proposed the establishment of Arab and Jewish state in Palestine. (Slantchev 2009: 4)

Stalin's policy towards Arab-Israel conflict:

The Soviet Union played a significant role in the Arab- Israel conflict as the conflict was the focal point in the global rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union in the cold war era. After the World War II, Stalin adopted a pro-Zionist foreign policy, without changing of his official anti- Zionist stance. Stalin declared that “he was a ‘Zionist’, however, was an entirely different thing. The admission, even though qualified, by the Russian communist leader seems to have had something to do with his postwar plans, since, up to that time, Zionism had been taboo for the communists” (Weinryb 1979-80: 556). Stalin adopted pro-Zionist stance with the hope that the new Jewish state would be the socialist country and would help to demise the western influence in this

region. Accordingly, in November 1947, the Soviet Union, together with the other Soviet bloc countries voted in favour of the United Nations partition plan for Palestine, which paved the way for the creation of the State of Israel. On May 14, 1948, Israel declared its independence. Within an hour, the US President Truman recognized de facto to the new state- Israel, but Soviet Union became the first country who grants Israel de jure recognition. (Brown 1948: 620)

In fact, the Soviet Union was based on Marxist- Leninist ideology and its policy towards third world countries was guided by this ideology. Soviet Union kept its policy of supporting communist movement across the world. (Kramer 1999: 539) However, Soviet policy towards Arab- Israel conflict is not easy to understand in this perspective. Soviet policy towards Arab- Israel conflict had not fully driven by Marxist- Leninist ideology. Soviet Union's policy towards Arab-Israel conflict mainly driven by sphere of influence rather than ideology. Earlier Soviet Union supported Israel against Arab countries and provided assistance to Israel in 1948 Arab- Israeli war, but latter it turns to the Arab countries and helped them against Israel. As a third world region located in the south of the Soviet Union, the West Asia region has assumed critical importance for Soviet foreign policy-makers. (Kramer 1999: 539)

Soviet Union's role in the First Arab- Israeli war, 1948-49:

The first Arab-Israeli war, fought in 1948-49, known by Israelis as the War of Independence and by the Palestinians as *al-Nakba* (the Catastrophe). (Bickerton 2009: 66) During the war, the Soviet Union supported Israel when it was attacked by the then Western-oriented Arab countries (mainly Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan) that opposed the 1947 United Nations resolution for the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. By the end of 1948, the Israeli army properly equipped with arms provided by Soviet Union, through Czechoslovakia defeated combined Arab forces. (Pressman 2005: 6) On January 12, 1949, the United Nations opened armistice talks in

Rhodes that Israel signed with Egypt (February 14), Lebanon (March 23), Transjordan (April 3) and Syria (July 20). Iraq refused to sign, and all five Arab nations remained in a state of war with Israel. Under this settlement, Israel expanded its borders to encompass 80% of Palestine. (Rowley and Taylor 2006: 79) But after a brief period (1947-1951), Soviet Union's relations with Israel deteriorated and Soviet Union supported Arab countries in the next four major wars against Israel in 1956, 1967, 1973 and during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

Khrushchev's policy of "Peaceful Coexistence" and the 1956 Suez Crises

The concept of "Peaceful Coexistence" was introduced by Nikita Khrushchev, the then General Secretary of the CPSU, at the 20th congress of CPSU held in Moscow on February 14-25, 1956. It has been argued that 'The 'peaceful coexistence' is not simply a description of contemporary international relations; rather it is a principle or set of principles of international relations. The concept was introduced to reduce hostility between two superpowers or between two ideologies- communism and capitalism.'" The committee on Peaceful Coexistence of the Soviet Association of International Law declared in 1962, "The principle of peaceful coexistence is a universally recognized principle of modern international law;whereas international law of the past was a law of war and peace, it has today become a law of peace and peaceful coexistence.'" (Lipson 1964: 871)

Due to its policy of "peaceful coexistence" Soviet Union did not directly involved in the Arab-Israeli war of 1956. The Arab-Israeli war of 1956 was the result of aggressive approach of Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's towards Israel and the West. Since 1948, the Egypt had remained in a war with Israel and she had always refused Israeli ships access to the Suez canal which pass through Egyptian territory, despite condemnation of the practice by the united nations security council in September 1951. In early 1956, Egypt denied Israeli ships access to the Gulf of Aqaba by blocking the straits of Tiran, which ultimately cut of Israel's access to petroleum, which was Israel's only outlet to the red sea. And in July 1956, Egyptian President Nasser seized the Suez Canal

from Great Britain and nationalized it, ultimately provoked Great Britain. The Suez Canal was owned by an Anglo- French company at that time. On October 29, Israel launched a pre- emptive strike, with the support of Great Britain and France, and dropped Israeli paratroops to seize the Mitla Pass in Sinai (Rowley and Taylor 2006: 80). The Soviet Union kept itself away from the Suez crisis of 1956 and on the other hand, the US was also not involved in the war. Both superpowers- the US and the Soviet Union opposed the attack on Egypt and US pressured on Britain, France and Israel to end the attack and withdraw their military forces from Egyptian territory. Despite the poor military performance of his forces, Egyptian President Nasser declared a symbolic victory (Pressman 2005: 5-6). However, the arms deal between Egypt and Czechoslovakia in September 1955 angered the US and Western world and led them to criticize Khrushchev's policy of "peaceful coexistence". With the signature of the Egyptian- Czech arms agreement, the Soviet bloc began to supply large quantities of modern weapons to the Arab nations. (Golani 1995)

Brezhnev's policy towards the Six-Day War of 1967:

The six-day war of 1967 between Israel and Arab countries happened due to the false report by Soviet Union. On May 13, 1967, the Egyptian President Nasser received a report by a Soviet intelligence which claimed that Israel was deploying massive troops on the Israeli- Syrian borders as it poised to attack. On the base of Soviet intelligence report, Egypt then took three escalatory steps, ultimately pushed the situation toward war. On May 13-14, Egypt deployed her forces in the Sinai near Israeli border; between May 16-21, Egypt asked the UN peacekeepers to leave the Sinai Peninsula where they had been since late 1956; and on May 23, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. Apart from these escalatory steps, Nasser spoke aggressively against Israel. On may 26, Nasser spoke confidently: "one day two years ago, I stood up to say that we have no plan to liberate Palestine and that revolutionary action is our only course to liberate Palestine..... Recently we felt we are strong enough, that if we were to enter a battle

with Israel, with god's help, we could triumph. On this basis, we decided to take actual steps." (Pressman 2005: 6)

On June 5, 1967, Israel attacked on Arab countries and in only six days, it defeated Arab armies, destroyed over \$2 billion worth of Egyptian military equipment. Israel captured the west bank from Jordan, the Gaza strip and Sinai peninsula from Egypt, the Golan heights from Syria and east Jerusalem including the old city and its holy sites, which Israel annexed and reunited with the western neighborhoods of Jerusalem. About 180,000 Palestinians who had not previously been refugees fled the west bank and Gaza during the war. Most fled to Jordan, and they technically are known as displaced persons rather than refugees. (ibid: 7)

Brezhnev's policy of 'Collective Security in Asia' and the Arab-Israeli war:

Soviet foreign policy under Leonid Brezhnev paid much attention on Asia. In June 1969 at the Moscow international meeting of the communist and workers parties, Leonid Brezhnev introduced the concept of "collective security in Asia". Surprisingly, Brezhnev's plan for collective security in Asia was greeted in the West, but immediately explained it that "the proposal was believed to be directed against China." This explanation was obvious in the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet military clashes on Damansky Island in January 1969. The so-called system of collective security in Asia was actually a proposal to create an anti-Chinese military alliance. (Ghehardt 1973: 1075-1076)

The Soviet leadership attempt to rally support for this idea with the help of pro-Soviet Asian parties and other fringe groups. The "Conference on Security and Cooperation" in Dacca in May 1973 comprising communist delegations from 26 countries ranging from the Middle East to Japan, and the international communist meeting held in Moscow in October 1973, signaled the dilemma in which the Soviet leadership finds itself. This is the result of improving relations with the US, Japan and

other Asian countries at the government level while at the same time supporting guerilla movements in a number of Asian countries and providing armament, training and encouragement for Arab aggression in the West Asia. (ibid: 1090)

The War of Attrition

The Israeli- Egyptian war of Attrition occurred from March 1969 to August 1970 was a direct result of the six- day war of 1967. After the defeat in the six- day war of 1967, Egyptian President Nasser's main aim was to lift the Middle East dispute from the local level to the international level. He therefore set out to involve the Soviet Union as deeply as possible in the Middle East problem. The Soviet Union stepped up considerably its material and military support to Syria and Egypt and it became deeply involved in the diplomacy of the Middle East dispute. Although it was opposed to the resumption of all-out war, it supported the Egyptian commando raids across the Suez Canal which ultimately developed into what became known as the War of Attrition. Soviet Union provided surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) and additional Soviet fighter aircraft (with Soviet pilots to fly them) to Egypt. In this war, there was a direct Soviet-Israeli air battle on July 30, 1970; resulting in five Soviet aircraft downed with no Israeli losses. Israel had not only won a resounding military victory but also captured huge Arab territory- the Golan Heights, the West Bank and the Sinai Peninsula. UN resolution 242 of November 22, 1967 called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories in return for peace with the Arab countries but the Israelis and the Arabs interpreted UN resolution differently and Israel's position progressively hardened. Israel's strategy was to settle the issue in its favour. The "War of Attrition" ended in August 1970 shortly after Egypt and Israel agreed to cease-fire. The war cost Israel over 700 dead and 2700 wounded, but the Arab losses were three to five times more. (Buckwalter: 119)

The Arab- Israeli War, 1973 or Yom Kippur war:

The October 1973 Arab-Israel war, known as the Yom Kippur War in Israel and the Ramadan War in Arab countries was a watershed event in Arab- Israeli relations. The

war is perhaps the most examined example of strategic surprise in history. The war began when the coalition of Arab states led by Egypt and Syria launched a joint surprise attack on Israel on Yom Kippur, the holiest day in Judaism, which happened to occur that year during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Egyptian and Syrian forces crossed ceasefire lines to enter the Israeli-held Sinai Peninsula and Golan Heights respectively, which had been captured and occupied since the 1967 Six-Day War. Both the US and the Soviet Union initiated massive resupply efforts to their respective allies during the war, and this led to a near-confrontation between the two nuclear superpowers (Buckwalter: 126-127).

Although the Arab armies did well in the first days of the 1973 war, but on October 15, the war took a sudden “U” turn in Israel’s favour. And by October 24, the Egyptian third army was surrounded by the Israeli army. The Soviet leadership did not expect for huge defeat of their Arab client, and as a response, Brezhnev informed the US President Richard Nixon that if the US did not agree to a joint expeditionary force to stop Israeli violations of the ceasefire, “we should be faced with the necessity urgently to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally”. In response, US put all its forces, including those in charge of strategic nuclear weapons, on a ‘Defense Condition Three’ alert, while at the same time increasing their pressure on the Israelis to lift the siege, which they ultimately did (Dawisha 1991: 125).

The war had far-reaching implications. In Israel, despite impressive operational and tactical achievements on the battlefield, the war effectively ended its sense of invincibility and contentment. The war also challenged many American assumptions; the US initiated new efforts at mediation and peacemaking. These changes paved the way for the subsequent peace process. The Camp David Accords that followed by the Egyptian-Israeli treaty- the first recognition by an Arab country to Israel existence. Egypt continued its pace away from the Soviet Union and left its influence entirely.

The Soviet Union and the Oil Crisis of 1973:

Following the defeat in the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, the oil exporting Arab countries imposed an oil embargo on Western European countries and Japan. These

included cut in oil production and banning of oil export to industrialized economies such as Western Europe and Japan, who were US allies. At the same time, the OPEC members, Arab and non-Arab, used this occasion to quadruple the price of their oil. These situations created panic among western European countries and Japan because they were highly dependent upon Middle East oil for their energy needs. Following the oil crisis, the western European states isolate themselves from the US policy towards Arab-Israeli conflict. (Campbell 1977: 89-90)

The oil crisis of 1973 provided an opportunity to Soviet Union to leverage its economy. At the time of outbreak of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, the Soviet Union was the third largest producer of oil in the world after the US and Saudi Arabia and it had also established close ties with major oil producers of the Middle Eastern region. The oil embargo imposed by Arab countries generated a situation of significant economic gains for the Soviet Union. Notably, the Arab countries imposed an oil embargo on western European states, who were US allies, not on the communist countries, who had been overt supporters of Arab sides. The communist countries were exempted from the oil embargo as they promised not to reexport any Arab oil to the embargoed countries. The Soviet Union managed to gain benefit of the situation and she increases the purchase of oil from Arab countries in 1973, especially from Iraq, who had refused to cut its oil production and restrict its sales. In 1973, Iraq sold a record of 80 million barrels oil to the Soviet Union, more than the total imports of oil from the Arab countries combined in any previous year. (Goldman 1975: 137-138)

Goldman (1975) argued that it is not clear whether the Soviet Union was persisting on her commitments to not sale oil to embargoed countries. The official position of the Soviet Union was 'the oil purchased from Arab states would only be sent to other socialist countries'. But the reality was different from the official position. The Soviet Union took the advantage of the oil scarcity situation in the Western world by it increasing its oil exports by 81 million barrels in 1973 compared to previous year. Undoubtedly, the 40 million barrels increase in imports from the Arab countries in 1973 made possible to additional exports to the West. The Soviet Union earned \$700 more in

1973 than in 1972 from exports of oil. The oil embargo also resulted in the increase of prices of the petroleum. Goldman (1975) also argued that almost three-fold increase in petroleum prices is a sign of some petroleum must be sold to the Netherlands whose Arab countries strictly embargoed. In December 1973, when a Swedish correspondent reported that the Soviet Union was selling oil to Netherlands, he was expelled by the Soviet government. In 1973, Soviet Union also sold some petroleum to the US. (Goldman 1975: 137-138)

Camp David Accord and Soviet Union's Absence

After a long battle, both the sides realized the seriousness of the war and turned to the peace agreement. On September 17, 1978, the Egyptian President Muhammad Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed an agreement at Camp David after thirteen days of secret negotiations from September 5 to September 17, 1978. The agreements were witness by the Jimmy Carter, the US President. The two framework agreements were signed at the Camp David. The first agreement reached by the United States, Israel and Egypt included several provisions including the set up of a self-governing authority in the west bank and Gaza to replace the Israeli military government in those areas. The second of these frameworks was a Peace Treaty not only between Egypt and Israel but also between Israel and each of its other Arab neighbors. The “self-governing” authority will exercise the powers for a five-year period of transition. In addition to Israel, Egypt and Jordan, representatives of the “self-governing” authority will participate in those negotiations (Sayegh 1979: 4).

The Camp David accords were a significant turning point in recent Middle East history. Praised by some for laying the foundations for peace between Egypt and Israel, but on the other hand, the accords have also been criticized for failing to achieve a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian dispute. But supporters and critics alike recognize the importance of the Camp David accords and both acknowledge the vital role played by the US in reaching an agreement. (Quandt 1986: 57)

The Camp David accord was the major defeat for the Soviet Union in the Middle Eastern region. The first peace agreement was held between the Israel and an Arab country, Egypt in the absence of Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, who was being the major player in the region and invested a lot in the Arab countries, had not been informed by her Arab ally about its intention to peace agreements with Israel. This incident was the sign of diminishing influence of Soviet Union in the region.

The Egypt- Israel Peace Treaty, 1979:

The Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979 was a direct result of the Camp David peace accords, signed in 1978. The Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin signed a peace treaty on March 26, 1979 in Washington and the treaty was witnessed by Jimmy Carter, the President of US of America. The treaty was the result of enormous effort of US President Jimmy Carter. By signing of the peace treaty, Egypt became the first Arab country who recognized Israel's existence. Jimmy carter described the treaty as a first step for building a strong edifice of relationship. (Vance and Dayan 1979: 327)

By signing of the treaty, both parties agreed to recognize and respect each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence. They agreed to refrain from the threat or use of force, directly or indirectly, against each other and will settle all disputes through peaceful means. The agreement included complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Sinai Peninsula which Israel had captured during the Six-Day War in 1967. The agreement also included the provision of free passage of Israeli ships and cargoes through the Suez Canal and its approaches through the Gulf of Suez and the Mediterranean Sea on the basis of the Constantinople convention of 1888, applying to all nations. The parties considered the Strait of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba as international waterways open to all nations for unimpeded and non-suspendable freedom of navigation and overflight. (ibid: 327-328)

Soviet Union was not part of this treaty, as it was not in Camp David accord. This was a major defeat for a country like Soviet Union who had invested lots of money and power for the economic and military development of the Egypt.

The Lebanon War, 1982

The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, which is also known as First Lebanon War, is perhaps the most complicated and controversial war in the history of Arab-Israel conflict. The immediate background was instability in south Lebanon bordered with Israel, from where Palestinians had been launching rockets against Israeli towns, especially Kiryat Shmonah. In retaliation o negotiate a disengagement agreement between both parties. Both Begin and PLO leader Arafat expressed their faith in multinational force to supervise an agreement. The new American secretary of state, George Shultz began to prepare for a more wide-ranging peace initiative. The way was now open for an evacuation of PLO guerrillas from Lebanon, supervised by a multinational force in which France and Italy had confirmed they would join the Americans. On August 13, the PLO submitted a list of 7100 guerrillas with a timetable for their evacuation by sea and land to various sympathetic Arab countries (Fraser 2004: 126-127).

The superpowers played a limited role in the events that led to the Lebanon war. While the US role was some critical but the Soviet role was negligible. Neither Soviet Union nor the US was particularly interested in Lebanon but they became involved in response to promptings by their local allies. Israel accused Soviet Union for aiding and abetting the PLO. But Soviet policy was confused and contradictory. It is true that the Soviet Union enabled the PLO in stockpiling of large quantities of weapons in south Lebanon but at the same time it urged the PLO to suspend the military action and come for a political solution of the conflict (Shlaim 1996).

Gorbachev's "New Thinking"

Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in 1985. After coming to power, he embarked on major domestic reforms and proclaimed the need for new political thinking in international relations. This new political thinking about international relations, which Gorbachev set out in December 1985, in his speech to the United Nations, embraces a number of propositions about the nature of international relations in the modern world: human interests take precedence over the interests of any particular class; the world is becoming increasingly interdependent; there would be no victors in a nuclear war; security has to be based increasingly on political rather than military instruments; and security must be mutual, especially in the context of United States- Soviet Union relations, since if one side is insecure it will only make the other side insecure too. In other words, Gorbachev's "New Thinking" was based on shared moral and ethical principles to solve global problems rather than sees it as ideological dispute between capitalism and communism. Gorbachev skillfully used the world media to resolve the global regional conflicts and arms negotiations with the United States. (Holloway 1988-1989: 66)

The relations between two superpowers- Soviet Union and the US began to improve due to Gorbachev's "new thinking" policy in the international relations. The US President Ronald Reagan and Gorbachev met first time in Geneva in November 1985. In October 1986, both leaders met in Reykjavik, Iceland to discuss about strategic arms reduction, but the talk was collapsed without reaching any significant agreement. In the summer of 1987, both leaders- Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan met once again in Washington and signed on the long-standing issue of Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty, and thus agreed to eliminate all intermediate and shorter-range missiles from Europe. In this series of meeting, the leaders of both countries, Mikhail Gorbachev and US President George H.W. Bush hold a meeting on December 2-3, 1989 in Malta and declared an end to the Cold War. (New Thinking: Foreign Policy under Gorbachev)

Soviet Union's relations with Europe also improved after Gorbachev's accession to the power, mainly after the signing of the INF Treaty with US as well as Soviet compliance to the fall down of communist rule in Eastern Europe during 1989-90. Since the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Soviet Union had gone through to the Brezhnev Doctrine; uphold the existing rules in socialist countries. Gorbachev continued this policy during the first half of his tenure. But in July 1989, he changed the existing policy and gave indication in his speech to the Council of Europe. Gorbachev advocated that each people have the sovereign right to choose their own political system. By then, however, the Soviet Union's control was diminishing over its outer empire. And throughout 1990-91, Soviet Union's controlled institutions in Eastern Europe were dismantled. (ibid)

Gorbachev's policy towards Israel and Arab countries:

The rise of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary of the CPSU in March 1985 reflected in the moved away from pro- Arab stance Soviet policy. After taking office, Gorbachev moved immediately to expand the diplomatic dialogue with Israel, sanctioned informal meetings in Paris and Washington between the Soviet and Israeli ambassadors in the summer of 1985 and allowing Poland and Hungary to arrange the establishment of interests sections in Israel. The first official meeting between Soviet and Israeli representatives took place in Helsinki, Finland in august 1986 nearly after 20 years and the following month, Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze and Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres met at the United Nations, the first high-level meeting between Soviet and Israeli officials since 1967. Neither of these meetings accomplished much of a substantive nature, but they reflected the interest of both sides in pursuing a dialogue. In regard of Soviet and western emotions, Gorbachev allowed Soviet Jews emigration to increase during 1987-88. Over 8000 Soviet Jews were allowed to leave compared with 1000 during previous year. Though this shift in policy was probably aimed to improve

relations with the US than to improve relations with Israel. (Goodman and Ekedahl 1988: 575)

Moscow's new determination to improve tie with Israel angered the Arab countries which came into light in 1987 at a state dinner with Syrian President Hafez al-Asad in the Kremlin. Syria was the Moscow's most trusted ally in the Arab world and Israel's major foe. But Gorbachev was determined to improve relations with Israel aimed to please United States. In his speech in April 1987, in the presence of Syrian President Hafez al-Asad, Gorbachev asserted that the absence of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel "cannot be considered normal". Gorbachev also emphasized that the Arab- Israel conflict could only be resolved through the political process not through the military means. He also convened Syria to repair its relations with the PLO and with the Iraq. Gorbachev's speech made it clear Soviet interests, not Arab interests, would dictate Moscow's foreign policy agenda (Goodman and Ekedahl 1988: 575).

Moscow resumed diplomatic relations with Israel on October 19, 1991, just 2 months prior to the collapse of the USSR. Gorbachev not only restores full diplomatic relations with Israel in October 1991 but also join with the US in cosponsoring a UN resolution reversing the "Zionism is Racism" resolution. Moscow welcomed the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and took part in the Madrid Conference with the US on October 30, 1991. Madrid conference provided the way for a peace process through negotiations involving Israel and its Arab neighbors such as Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan as well as Palestinians. At the same time, Soviet-Syrian relations deteriorated when Gorbachev refused to give weapons to Syria it needed for military parity with Israel. It was the last negotiation in which the USSR and US both present; two months later the USSR collapsed and split into fifteen independent states. (Freedman 1995: 234)

First Intifada, 1987-1993

The first Intifada, popularly known as Intifada was a Palestinian uprising against Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory. It included the violent behavior and

initiated by the young Palestinians, who started throwing stones and iron bars on Israeli soldiers who responded with rubber bullets, tear gas and tanks. The movement lasted six years with a series of violent attacks from both sides. (Bickerton 2009: 158)

In February 1988, a new militant fundamentalist group, the Islamic resistance movement (Hamas) joined the intifada. Hamas was set up by the Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas's goal was to establish an Islamic state in Palestine, based on Sharia. During the six years of intifada period, thousands of Palestinians and many Israelis lost their lives. But the intifada movement was unable to achieve its goal of an independent Palestinian state. (ibid: 158-159)

Palestinian declaration of independence

In consideration of the Jordanian monarch's announcement, PLO leader Yasser Arafat took the diplomatic initiative. After meeting with King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, he proclaimed the independent state of Palestine by a vote of 253 to 46 at a meeting in Algiers on November 15, 1988. The proclamation was also read in front of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. The declaration of independence, although it mirrored the Israeli declaration of independence in its arguments, did not explicitly recognize Israel. However, it explicitly accepted the UN General Assembly (partition) resolution 181 of 1947 described it as providing international legitimacy that ensure the right of Palestinian Arab people to sovereignty. The acceptance of UN resolution provided base for the forthcoming peace process with Israel. (ibid: 161-162)

Soviet policy towards Gulf war and Arab-Israel conflict

The first Gulf war, also known as Operation Desert Storm broke out on August 2, 1990, when Iraqi forces began to invade Kuwait, a gulf country. The invasion was condemned by the world community and brought immediate economic sanctions against

Iraq by UN Security Council. The coalition of forces led by the US responded to the invasion and freed Kuwait nearly after seven month of Iraqi occupation. (Fuller 1991: 55)

The war in the Persian Gulf posed a major crisis to Soviet foreign policy in this region. At several point in the crisis it was uncertain just how firmly Moscow's principles of "new thinking" in foreign policy would hold. The crisis embraced a broad range of Soviet interests, in both the west and the third world, and in military and civilian sphere. Soviet Union, with the other UN Security Council members condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Gorbachev even stated that the Soviet Union bore special responsibility for the invasion, since Iraq employed weapons provided over many years by the Soviet Union for defensive purposes. Not only the Iraqi act was excoriated, but the very nature of Saddam Hussein's regime- long a close Soviet ally by virtue of a 1972 treaty of friendship and cooperation- was characterized in remarkably harsh language. In the end of the crisis, Moscow did indeed sustain its general commitment to all UN resolution on Iraq. (ibid: 59)

The joint Soviet- American condemnation and the cooperation in the UN Security Council deliberations were to be the high point of Soviet- cooperation. Although the two superpowers were not always in complete agreements on tactics, Moscow's partnership was essential to the successful reversal of Saddam Hussein's aggression against Kuwait. It was also the most dramatic manifestation of Mikhail Gorbachev's "new thinking" operating in the third world. His action during the gulf crisis was also reflected his commitment to consolidate the Soviet Union's already transformed relationship with the United States. (Rubinstein 1994: 301)

The inter-state conflict among Arab countries forced Soviet Union on the backdrop in this region. In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait in the name of false allegation of stealing Iraqi petroleum. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait subsequently led to direct military intervention by the US led forces. After seven- month long invasion by Iraqi forces, Kuwait became free with the help of United States. This war directly or indirectly

increases stature of US over Soviet Union in this region. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait put a broad effect on Arab- Israel conflict. As a result of the gulf war, Iraq had lost not only its nuclear facilities and air force but most of its conventional power. Iraq also lost the support of Soviet Union, most trusted friend. Arafat sided with Saddam Hussein during the Gulf Crisis (1990 - 1991), and thereby lost the financial support of the Gulf States. The war had heightened interest on the part of the Arab states, along with the United States, to resolve the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. Arab attitudes towards Israel were said to be changed as a result of the war. Israel's non-intervention in the war is seen as having contributed to the success of the allied effort and it put Israel on the same side as Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. In fact, before the war Syria had strong incentives to reconsider its stance toward Israel, in particular because it is no longer able to count on the Soviet Union for military assistance because of Gorbachev's "new thinking" policy. All of these were positive factors that suggest that the prospects for peace are very good at this moment. (Segal 1991: 351-354)

In 1991, just after the first Gulf War, the US with Soviet Union played a major role in the Middle East peace process. US President George H.W. Bush, with the help of secretary of state James Baker, called a conference in Madrid, Spain between Israel and the Arab nations. The conference was to serve only as a preamble to direct bilateral and multilateral talks between Israel and Arab countries. After the gulf war of 1991, the stature of the US rose among most Middle Eastern Arab states. But eleven sessions and twenty-two months after Madrid, the negotiations proved unproductive. The PLO regarded the framework for talks as unfair, and refused to consider the US or its officials to be "honest brokers". Israel realized that Palestinian negotiators from the occupied territories were unwilling or unable to negotiate independently from the PLO (Stein 1995).

The Arab-Israeli peace process is the result of intensive efforts of superpowers. The Soviet foreign minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh with US secretary of state James Baker paid invaluable trips to the West Asia in June 1991. They each encouraged their respective allies to enter into peace talks despite their misgivings about the current status

quo. Baker and Bessmertnykh also visited each other's allies to reassure them as well as to limit impressions of unilateral aspirations. In August 1991, both Baker and Bessmertnykh, issued a joint statement on the West Asia, formally ended the unilateral US mediation that had been in place since 1978, when President brokered Camp David accord of 1978 and Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty of 1979 unilaterally. In October 1991, the new Soviet foreign minister, Boris Pankin, again coordinated trips to the region with Baker and pushed for the opening of Madrid talks without preconditions and under arrangements that excluded PLO participation (Herrman 1994: 463).

Madrid Conference, 1991 and Soviet Union's role:

The Soviet Union's changed policy towards Arab countries and Gorbachev's decision in 1987 to stop subsidizing Syrian arms sales strongly forced Arab countries to make peace with Israel. Mikhail Gorbachev's decision made no choice for Damascus and she dropped its pursuit of strategic parity with Israel. The shift in the global and regional distribution of power set the stage for the Arab-Israeli peace talks of the 1990s. The US played an important role in bringing the parties together for diplomatic talks. During the summer of 1991, after intense US diplomatic lobbying, all the key parties agreed to attend a conference held in Madrid, Spain from October 30 to November 1, 1991, known as Madrid conference. The Madrid conference was co-sponsored by the US and the Soviet Union. It was an early attempt by the international community to start a peace process through negotiations involving Israel and the Arab countries including Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan as well as Palestinians (the Palestinian team, because of Israeli objections, was formally a part of a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation and consisted of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip) It was the last conference held with both the USSR and US present; the USSR collapsed later that year in December 1991. The conference produced no breakthroughs and largely served as an opening forum for the public repetition of uncompromising positions (Pressman 2007: 258-260)

The talks between Israel and Jordan continued for almost two years following the Madrid conference, culminating in the signing of a peace treaty on October 26, 1994. (Ryan 1998: 161)

The Madrid conference (1991) was different in some manners from previous effort of Arab- Israeli conference diplomacy. The conference did not take place in the aftermath of a prolonged period of communal violence or state-to-state conflict between Israel and her Arab neighbors. Rather, it came after a long period of pre-negotiations. The main issues of the negotiating agenda were political, not military. Like earlier official Arab- Israeli negotiations, the Madrid conference was based on the content and concepts inherent in UN resolution 242 and 338. (Stein 1995)

Although US brought Soviet Union into the peace process, the Soviet Union was simultaneously moving away from its traditional bargaining strategy. The Soviet Union's behavior at that time might be concluded because of several facts: this time Soviet Union was moving forward to improve its relations with Israel and it was also intended to appease US. With the purpose of to reduce the effect of diminishing economy, Soviet Union cut its own costs by reducing arms production and supplies to its Arab allies. Soviet Union change its attitude because US reassured Moscow that Israel would lead to more change in Tel Aviv's stance vis-à-vis the Palestinians and withdrawal of troops from occupied territory. It is clear that in 1991 the Soviet Union was ready to make peace with Israel regardless of Arabs resistance and before Israel agreed to make concessions on the territorial and political status quo. Since mid-1989, Moscow moved one step forward to improve its relations with Israel, when she Russian Jews immigration to Israel regardless of Arab protests. And by 1993, 450,000 Jews emigrated from former Soviet Union to Israel. Soviet Union also reversed its position on the UN resolution which equate Zionism with racism, and helped to get the resolution overturned in October 1991. And finally, Moscow and Tel Aviv reestablished diplomatic relations just one week before the Madrid talk's convened (Herrmann 1994: 463-464).

Although the Soviet Union disintegrated in December 1991 and its superpower status gone, the Russian federation under President Yeltsin hosted the first round of

multilateral peace talks in January 1991, which was set out in Madrid conference. Throughout eleven round of unproductive bilateral talks between Israel and Arab, begun in Madrid, Russia remain committed to the peace process. Although the Israeli decision to expatriate 415 Palestinians who were supporters of Islamic Resistance Front (HAMAS) provoked anger among Russians and criticism by media, it did not deter Russia's determination to encourage Arab participation. The Israeli bombing on Lebanon in July 1993 would also not change Russia's position and it remains support for talks. But Yeltsin and Kozyrev, foreign minister of Russia, faced domestic criticism for failure to bolster Arab bargaining on the negotiating table (ibid: 464).

After coming to power, Gorbachev introduced the policy of Perestroika (restructuring) and Glasnost (openness) to reform the soviet political system. His policy finally led to the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the last three years of his leadership, Gorbachev tried to maintain good relationship with all countries of the West Asia region including Israel. Gorbachev started diplomatic dialogue with Israel in 1988 and establish full diplomatic relationship in 1991. Gorbachev also advocated Arab countries to find out a political solution to the Arab-Israel conflict rather than military and he refused to provide arms and weapons to Arab countries such as Syria to military parity with Israel. Because of the change of Soviet attitude towards Israel, the US invited it to take part in the Arab-Israeli peace process held in Madrid in October 1991, which continued after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, the first multilateral peace talk held in Moscow set out in Madrid conference. The Russia, the successor state of the Soviet Union, was part of Oslo peace accords signed in Washington on September 13, 1993.

Scope and significance of the study:

After the dissolution, Russia's status diminished as super power and its economy also suffered on the backdrop. Keeping these objectives in mind, some of them are in fact continuation of history; Russia formulated her foreign policy towards Arab- Israel

conflicts. Russia resumed its diplomatic relationships with Israel in October 1991 and increased trade with her so as to grow up its diminishing economy. Russia also regained good relations with former Soviet allies such as Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. The Russian foreign policy community's sentiment that Russia should be recognized as great power provides a further reason why Russia should play an active independent role in the West Asia. In April 1994, Yeltsin's then envoy to the West Asia, Viktor Posuvalyuk outlined Russian foreign policy goals to this region: "Russia as a great power has two key roles with regard to the Middle East. Firstly, it is a close neighbor, a major power with very broad interests- economic, political, spiritual, cultural and militarily. Its second role is as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and a co-sponsor alongside the USA in the Middle East peace process" (Smith 2002).

The West Asia region is important to Moscow for several other reasons. First, because of ethnic factor: since the fall of the Soviet Union, there is no wall separating Russian Muslims, who account for one-seventh of the country's population from their brethren in the Arab world. On the other hand, after the post-Soviet exodus, some 20% of Israel's population are former Soviet Jews, nearly all of them Russian-speaking. Second, due to the energy factor: Russia sees itself as an energy power, and looks for opportunities south of the border. Fifth, Russia pays more attention due to the current US focus on the region, and it's directly military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Research objectives:

1. To highlight the Russian foreign policy towards West Asia in the context of Arab- Israel conflict.
2. To analyze how far Russia is able to maintain its position as a dominant player in the Arab- Israel conflict.
3. To examine holistically the repercussion of Arab- Israel conflict on the domestic political processes of Russia.

Research questions:

1. How far Russian foreign policy towards Arab- Israel conflicts is compatible with its broader foreign policy in the post- 1991 phase?
2. To what extent in the post- 2001 phase Russia is rebinding its relations with West Asian countries?
3. Can Russia's presence in West Asia be compatible with broader western objectives?

Hypotheses:

1. The chaos and uncertainty in the foreign policy direction of Russia in the first half of the 1990s resulted in passive withdrawal of Russia from the Arab- Israel peace process.
2. Mutual economic interdependence and ethnic issues propelled Russia to establish good relationship with Israel after the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Research methodology

The research methodology adopted in my research work would apply various primary sources for data such as the government official documents, government's reports and UN documents as well. For secondary sources, books, articles, newspaper reports and web reports will be used. The study would be analytical and descriptive in nature. The research would apply qualitative and quantitative method.

Chapter II

Russia's policy towards Arab-Israel conflict under Yeltsin

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the world witnessed the dramatic change in the international system. The Soviet Union disintegrated in December 1991 and split into fifteen independent states. The communism fell in the Eastern Europe and in Russia, which is the successor state of the Soviet Union. The emergence of new states in Central Asia and Transcaucasia keeps Russia physically away from the West Asian Region. Russian political and economic system was also underwent a quiet revolution. Russia adopted a market economy in place of closed economy and democracy in the political sphere.

Formulation of Russian foreign policy:

After the disintegration, the Russian parliament and other government institutions became an arena for the ideological conflicts between different groups of the Russian society. The Russian domestic political conflicts and Russia's foreign policy uncertainties were closely intertwined at that time. The effect of Russia's domestic political conflicts had been clearly seen on Russia's foreign policy. Mikhail Gorbachev was replaced by Boris Yeltsin in August 1991 just four months before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Boris Yeltsin focused on Russian interests instead of the interests of Soviet Union. During this time, foreign policy formulation has become contentious issue between the different groups in the Russian Parliament. During the first year of Yeltsin presidency, the debate over making the foreign policy continued in the same vein as that had existed under Mikhail Gorbachev. The two major group were seen at that time- the first group, generally referred to as Atlanticists, wants to integrate Russia with the western world and sees Russia's interests were tremendously linked to the western world. They argued that Russia had nothing to gain from old Soviet ties with dictatorial regimes such as those of Syria and Iraq. The second groups, generally referred to as Eurasianists, are those who were highly suspicious of the western world in general and the US in particular. (Nizameddin 1999: 83-86)

The second group was more complex in nature and it was a combination of neo-communists, Russian nationalists/ fascists and interest groups (mainly in the arms

industry) who were cautious of reforms and who had been pursued Russian leadership about western conspiracies to undermine their country. For example, a major number of Russian nationalist did not wish to associate with either European or Asian cultures but regarded itself as superior to both. (ibid: 83)

Russian foreign policy makers began to favour a Russian course that protected its traditional interests, particularly in the West Asia. Vladimir Lukin, Chairman of parliament's foreign affairs committee, pointed out that Russia had deep and historic interest with West Asian countries, which needed to be protected and avoid regional imbalances in this region. By protecting the Russian interests in this region, it can also prevent the disruption of social and political balance inside Russia itself. Lukin referred especially to Turkey and Iran, added that Russia's primary interest lies in preventing open conflict with third world countries for influence in the power vacuum of Central Asia and the Transcaucasia. Kozyrev and his policy of neglecting third world in general and West Asia in particular were highly criticized by senior Russian political figures. (ibid: 84)

Aleksei Pushkov interpreted Kozyrev's policy in the following way:

“Russia should obediently follow the US. (.....) This was the source of Kozyrev's idea of a strategic partnership that assumed a subordinate role for Moscow in matters of world politics. In exchange for Russia's consent to be America's younger brother, Washington was expected to provide financial assistance, a flow of investment, and technological modernization.” (Nizameddin 1999: 84)

More specific subdivisions were gradually developed from the more general Eurasianist- Atlanticist division. Many scholars explained political divisions in Moscow as basic Left- Right- Centre approach in general. Margot Light categorized the debate between two major groups- one is liberal westernizers, who favored a market economy and held pro- western views and the other is fundamentalist nationalists, the people who were extreme nationalist and were opposing economic reform. After 1992, she argued that there was a spread of nationalism which created a new group of pragmatic

nationalists, who proposed integrationalist stance with other FSR and more independent policy towards the West. Alex Pravda and Neil Malcolm both accepted these general lines of division. Pravda saw the categories of debate in making the foreign policy as being a carbon copy of splits in domestic affairs between the radical reformers, conservative oppositionists and centrists. Talal Nizameddin's categorization of the policy-making group is something different from the above categorization. He argued that from 1993 to 1996 five distinct identifiable groups had evolved: pro-western radicals, pragmatic pro-westerners, centrist- nationalists, pragmatic nationalists and extreme nationalists. He expressed his disagreement with the above thinkers and argued that it was incorrect to place the broad range of opinions between the liberal westernizers and fundamentalist nationalists under the heading of pragmatic nationalists because within this middle ground there were important divisions. (Nizameddin 1999: 85-86)

One Russian writer Alexei G Arbatov (1993) wrote in his article that most western observers identified three major rival groups in the contemporary Russian domestic politics: reformers, reactionaries and centrists, further sub-divided into many sub-factions and groups. In the same article, he categorized the four major groups which existed during the political developments (1991-1993) in Russia, who were affecting or trying to affect the Russia's foreign policy. These groups were: pro- western group, moderate liberals, centrist and moderate conservatives, and neo-communists and nationalists. They vary in their numbers, their political, ideological and institutional motivations, and the channels through which they conduct their influence.

1.1 Pro-Western Group

The group which was headed by foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev is characterized as pro-western group, heavily impressed by economic determinism and democratic values of the western world. The main goal of this group was to integrate Russia-politically and economically with the Western world, particularly with the US. Andrei Kozyrev led group had characterized Western world as role model for Russia in terms of both politically and economically. However, this doctrine underestimated the uniqueness

of Russian state and its heritage. Kozyrev got support from President Boris Yeltsin and some cabinet ministers such as Gennady Burbulis, Yegor Gaidar, and Mikhail Poltoranin. These officials have had no previous experience in the foreign policy; and they mainly concentrate their attention on Russian domestic affairs and economic reforms of the country. (Arbatov 1993: 9-10)

From August 1991 to the mid-1992, the ideas of this group dominated in foreign-policy making and its implementation in relations with the West on arms control and regional problems, and on Russia's positions in the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). (ibid: 10)

1.2 Moderate Liberals

The second group which consists of moderate-liberal representatives of the government institutions and of the society. Although they were quite pro-westerners in principle but in most cases they distinguished by a more realistic, and held more pragmatic views towards Russia, the western world and the world at large. The proponents of this thinking were Vladimir Lukin, ambassador to the US and in parliament these positions had been advocated by Deputies Alexander Peskunov, Eugeni Kozhokhin, and Alexei Tzarev. Some of the older generation liberal intellectuals are also quite close to this thought, including Georgy Arbatov, Roald Sagdeev Oleg Bogomolov, and Nikolai Petrakov. In the academic community of younger generation this thought was expressed by Gregory Yavlinsky, Alexei Arbatov, Sergei Rogov, Alexander Konovalov, Emil Pain, Leonid Vasiliev and Pavel Bayev. (ibid: 10-11)

The major difference between the moderate liberals and the pro-western group is that the moderate liberals emphasized more on the distinct Russian foreign policy and security priorities. They argued that Russia has unique geographical location and it is transforming in political sphere. They favored the western model of economic and political development but they also believe in Russia's distinct feature of foreign interests from the US or other western states. This possibility for difference suggest bargaining,

not confrontation, just as the western powers bargained over numerous economic and political issues, especially after the end of the cold war. This thought gives the highest priority on Russia's relations with other FSR. Because of the influence of this thought, the then foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev changed his policy in late 1992. (ibid: 11)

1.3 Centrists and Moderate Conservatives

The third group which was known as centrist and moderate conservatives, was associated with "Civic Union" and represented by people such as Russian vice President Alexander Rutskoi, Ruslan Khasbulatov (speaker of the supreme Soviet), members of parliament Nikolai Travkin (chairman of the Russian Democratic Party), Ergeniy Ambartsumov (chairman of the parliamentary foreign affairs committee), and Alexander Tsalko. It enjoys the support of a predominant part of the military high command, industrial managers and the main segment of the federal bureaucracy. (ibid: 12)

This school of thought was in favour of better relations with the West, but not at the cost of diminishing Russia's role as an independent great power in its own sphere of influence. Some people of this thought were suspicious about western intentions. They asserted that the US and other western countries would not sacrifice any of its interests for Russia's benefit and they warned many times against excessive reliance on western economic assistance and political guidance. They suggested that Russia should diversify its attention towards alternative political partners such as China, India and Iran, instead of focusing on west. (ibid: 13)

1.4 Neo-Communists and Nationalists

The fourth group was the right-wing group of neo-communists and nationalists (also called "hurrah-patriots" or "red-browns"). Some of them were former anti-communists and even dissidents. This group was led by some figures such as Sergei Baburin, Nikolai Pavlov, Michail Astafiev (constitutional-democratic party), Sergei Terekhov, Victor Aksiuchits (Christian-democratic party), Iliia Konstantinov, Viktor Anpilov, Gennadiy Ziuganov, Alexander Sterligov, Viktor Filatov, Albert Makashov, and

Viktor Alksnis. In the Supreme Soviet, they organized in a multi-party coalition called “Russian unity”, while outside of parliament they rely on the notorious “Front of national Salvation” and various militarist and chauvinist organizations such as the All-Army Officers Assembly, “Nashi”, etc. (Arbatov 1993: 14)

The proponents of this group were interested in the revival of the Russian empire and Russia’s superpower status, not on the premises of the communism, but on the premises of Great Russian nationalism. They were prepared to reinstate the Soviet Union by military force and advocated tough policies towards the separatists’ movements in the Baltic and East European states. These politicians proposed to resume Russia’s alliances with all radical anti-western regimes such as Iraq, Libya, North Korea and Cuba. These hard-liners were also in favour of a crash military build-up, and they were against START II and the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE). (ibid: 14)

The development of Russian policy under Yeltsin was accompanied by major structural reforms and underwent three key phases- the first phase lasted until late 1992, when the pro-western radicals were strongest in the policy-making; the second phase was a period of uncertainty from late 1992 to late 1995; and third phase well known for a stable and recognizable policy which was established in 1996 after the appointment of hard-liner Evgeni Primakov as foreign minister. (Nizameddin 1999: 88)

Russia’s interests in the West Asia

After the disintegration, Moscow began to adopt a policy which was different from the former Soviet Union. Russia adopted democratic system in the political sphere and market economy in the economic sphere. To reform its political and economic system, Russia sought help from the western world, particularly from the US. At that time, Russian leadership adopted pro-western policy and followed the US path in world

affairs. Moscow's principal interests were laid with the Western world- US and Europe, including western members of the commonwealth of the independent states. But it does not mean that Russia ignored other major countries of Asia such as India and China. The West Asia, which lies geographically between these two regions, is once again gained importance among Russian foreign policy-makers. Russia's withdrawal from the region, symbolized by the 1989 pullout from Afghanistan, has been reversed. Moscow has reestablished political ties with its former allies such as Syria; reestablish diplomatic relations with Israel after a long chilled relationship from 1967 to 1991; sees Turkey as a partner in the region; maintains a rich but complex relationship with Iran; and promotes trade with energy rich countries, from Algeria and Libya to the Gulf States. In the consideration of her objectives, Russia formulates her foreign policy towards West Asian region. Russia's principal objectives are to advance its economic interests and to counter threats to Russia's national security. (Trenin 2010: 3)

Trenin (2010) argues that the Russia federation is interested in the West Asia because of several reasons. In geopolitical terms, Russia is interested to build a power bloc under her supremacy and aims to be the principal outside player in the South Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and Central Asia, that is just north of the West Asia. Moscow sees the growing importance of West Asian region because of its geostrategic location. And Russia is interested to establish good relations with major countries of this region such as Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia whom it sees as key regional partners of Russia. In the wake of the first gulf war and the invasion of the Afghanistan and Iraq, Moscow feared the increase of US military presence in the region pose a potential security threat to Russia. Russia continues object the US military presence in Central Asia after the 9/11 terrorist attack. (Ibid) In geo-economic terms, Russia, as a leading energy producer, sees the oil and gas producing countries of the West Asia both as partners and competitors at the same time. It shares an interest with them to maintain the oil price at high level and it also regulates competition in the gas market. For example, Russia persuades Iran, to export her gas to eastern side such as to India and Pakistan, instead of western side to Europe. Gazprom sees the Nabucco project, a gas pipeline from the Caspian to Europe, as

a direct competitor of its own south stream plan, and wants to make sure Nabucco has no commitments from the Caspian gas producers. Russian companies have also signed several projects with the West Asian countries such as Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Libya and Algeria as well in oil and gas sectors. Besides of energy sector, Russia is also cooperating with Israel in information technology, communication, energy, diamond trade and military technology. (Trenin 2010: 4-6)

In security terms, Russia is worry about the emerging religious extremism in the West Asian region. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, there is no wall separating between Russian Muslims and their brethren in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and the Arab world. The continuing religious and political turbulence within the Muslim world spread radical ideas and militants from the West Asia to the Russian north Caucasus, the central Russian republics of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, and the post-Soviet Central Asia. The bitter experience of the two Chechen war compelled Russian leaders to take attention towards this region. Russia's other main security concern is nuclear proliferation. Since late 1990s, Moscow had been particularly worry about Pakistan's nuclear programme, which it believed were not taken seriously by the US at the time. The emergence of nuclear- armed Pakistan in 1998 vindicated Russia's fears. Russian leaders viewed Afghanistan, Pakistan as training grounds for international jihadist. In terms of Iran, Russia does not want to see it as nuclear state, albeit Russia support Iranian nuclear program for the peaceful use. Russia has suggested that Iranian nuclear program should be complete monitored by the international atomic energy agency (IAEA) that would keep Iran's nuclear program certifiably peaceful. Russia warned US and its allies that any military attack against Iran would delay the Iranian nuclear program, but not destroy it and make sure Iran would emerge as a nuclear-weapon state in the future. In cultural terms, Russia and one West Asian country- Israel has a close cultural link. Nearly twenty percent of Israel's populations are Russian Jews, who migrated from the Russia and they all are Russian-speaking who share close cultural link with Russia. Finally, Russia is taking interest in the region due to the US presence in this region. Russian leaders have, severally, stated that they want to revive its relationship

with the old allies of the former Soviet Union in this region and make an alternative to the US. (Trenin 2010: 5-6)

2. Russia's foreign policy towards West Asia- A General Conception

In the most democratic countries, domestic politics play a significant role in the making of foreign policy. Russia is not exception of it, which became democratic at the end of 1991; domestic politics have had played central role in Russian foreign policy-making, not only towards the West Asia, but toward the world as a whole. The impact of domestic politics on Russian foreign policy towards the West Asia is clearly illustrated by the shift of Russian policy from a strong pro-western tilt in 1992 to a highly nationalist tend in 1996. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the drastic reduction in Russian economic and military power in the 1990s resulted in a Russian retreat from the West Asia, a region where the Soviet Union had been a significant player since the mid-1950s. (Smith 2002: 1)

The Russian leadership has long desired to return to this important volatile region. In November 1994, Yeltsin's then envoy to the West Asia, Viktor Posuvalyuk, outlined Russia's view on the West Asia. "Russia is a close neighbor of the near east and gulf region. Russia has built major power stations, plants and dams- unique dams in the region and there are many Russians there – there are 800000 former Russians and former Soviet citizens in Israel. Over 100000 families in the Arab world are related to families in Russia. Almost 20 million Russian Muslims regularly visit Mecca in their tens of thousands. The Russian foreign policy community's sentiment that Russia should be recognized as a great power provides a further reason why Russia should play an active independent role in the West Asia. (ibid)

In April 1994, Posuvalyuk outlined Russian policy goals as follows:

"Russia as a great power has two key roles with regard to the West Asia. Firstly it is a close neighbor, a major power with very broad interests, economic, political, spiritual, and religious and of course military. Its second role is as a permanent member

of the security council and a co-sponsor alongside the USA in the West Asia peace process.” (Smith 2002: 1)

Russia has long advocated the creation of an OSCE type regional security in the region. Her position as co-chairman (along with the USA) of the Madrid process, which began in 1991, gives her an official leading role in attempts to reach a settlement, although her weakness has meant that the USA has played the leading role to promote a peace process in the region, with the Russian federation doing little other than following the US line. (Smith 2002: 2)

Russia-Israel relations- A new beginning

Russia reestablished diplomatic relations with Israel in 1991 just before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Freedman (1998) argued that there are five major periods in the evolution of the relationship between Israel and Russia during the Yeltsin presidency. First, the Israeli- Russian honeymoon period from December 1991 to December 1992; second, December 1992 to December 1993, when Yeltsin fostered the relationship despite rising domestic opposition from communists and ultranationalists; third, from December 1993 to December 1995, when Russian-Israeli relations, particularly in the areas of trade and diplomacy, developed despite Yeltsin adopted a much more nationalistic foreign policy; fourth, January-June 1996, when Yeltsin turned to the right and appointed Yevgeny Primakov as Russia’s foreign minister began to cast a chill on the Russian- Israeli relationship; and fifth, the July 1996- October 1997 period, when economic and military relations began to improve, although political relations had their ups and downs. (Freedman 1998: 148)

Russia’s interests in Israel are basically four-fold. The primary interest is economic, with trade between both countries reached to approximately \$650 million dollars in 1996 made Israel second largest trading partner in the West Asia after Turkey. The trade includes Israeli supplies of agricultural and high-tech goods to Russia, joint cooperation in military technology etc; the second major Russian interest is diplomatic. A

good tie with Israel enables Russia to play or at least appear to play, a major role in the Arab- Israeli peace process and Yeltsin was successful in this effort until April 1996, when he unsuccessfully sought to mediate the Israeli-Lebanese conflict (although he tried again in October 1997); the third Russian interest is a cultural one, with the more than 750000 Jews immigrated from the former Soviet union, almost all of them Russian-speaking. Russian is now the third most widely spoken first language in Israel (after Hebrew and Arabic). Israel has the largest Russian Diaspora outside the former Soviet Union, and there are extensive cultural ties between the two countries. This complicates Russia's role in the West Asia with many ethnic Russians and wealthy Russian citizens residing or living in Israel. (Freedman 1998: 148-149)

Israel was also interested to establish good relationship with Russia for many reasons. From the Israeli point of view there are four major interests. The first and most important interest of Israel is to maintain the steady flow of immigration of Jews from the Russia, which has provided Israel with a large number of scientists and engineers. The second interest of Israel is to prevent the export of nuclear weapons to Israel's neighbors' countries such as Libya, Syria, Iran and Iraq, as well as to convene Russia to limit supply of conventional weapons to these countries. The third interest is to develop trade relations with Russia, which ultimately help both countries on the path of development. Finally, Israel hopes to see Russian diplomatic position in the West Asia and, if possible, she [Russia] pursued its erstwhile ally, Syria, to be more flexible in reaching a peace agreement with Israel. (ibid: 149)

During the Yeltsin presidency, especially Yeltsin's first term in the President office, Russia's relations with Israel was still on the road to improvement that had begun in 1988 when Gorbachev was the General Secretary of the CPSU. During the Yeltsin period, the relationship between both countries was a mixed one and sometimes generated serious imbalances between them. However, both the countries developed relations in many spheres including political, cultural and economic relations. However, a Russian-Israeli relation was mainly dominated by the economic factor, particularly in the

agricultural sector. By the end of 1996, Russian-Israeli trade had exceeded a half billion dollars a year, and Israel had become Russia's second most important trading partner in the West Asia region after Turkey. Besides economic relation, another sphere of cooperation was cultural one. President Yeltsin continued allowed Russian Jews to immigrate to the Israel in the consideration of the US-Israeli sentiment. Despite best of relations between Russia and Israel, there were several factors that abandoned to the full development of good relationship between two countries. The signing of Russian-Syrian military agreement on 27 April 1994 caused a serious tension among Israelis. But later, Russian President Yeltsin assured Israeli Prime Minister Rabin that only defensive arms and spare parts would be sold to Syria (Freedman 1995). While Russia's relations with Syria remained strained because of Syria's \$10 billion debt to the former Soviet Union which Russia wanted to repay and President Yeltsin also promised Rabin that it would use its influence with Syria to help find information about Israeli soldiers who were still missing since the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. (Freedman 1998: 154-155)

In 1994, following the 25 February incident in Hebron in which a crazed Israeli settler 29 Arabs praying in the disputed cave of the Patriarchs, President Yeltsin, without coordinating with the US, urged a return to Madrid to save the peace talks and he also called for the introduction of international observers to protect the Palestinians- a position supported by the PLO but rejected by the Israel. However, Moscow quickly abandoned the 'Madrid II' peace plan. (Freedman 1995: 244)

3. Russia's Policy towards Arab- Israel conflicts and Peace Process

After a long bloody war between Israel and Arab countries, the more and more leaders from both sides realized that there is no military solution to their conflict. The international pressure also mounted on Israel and Arab countries to come on the negotiating table. Both sides concluded that mutual recognition and sharing historic Palestine was the only viable option. The dissolution of the Soviet Union, the major patron of Arab sides, was another reason which forced Arab countries including Palestine to come on the negotiating table with Israel.

The lonely superpower- the US and the Russia, the successor state of Soviet Union, played major role as mediator to resolve Arab-Israeli conflict. Even Russia's great power status and economy had been diminished after the disintegration, but it did not devaluate its role as co-sponsor in the Arab-Israeli peace process. The Arab-Israeli peace process which started in 1991 with the Madrid conference continued till Camp David summit of 2000 and Russia was present at every stage with exception of few. Initially, Russia under Yeltsin was played minor role and allowed the US to play as main broker in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. In the first multilateral peace talks between Arab and Israel including others, which held in Moscow on January 28-29, 1992, Yeltsin and his advisors silently allowed the Israel to "control the entire agenda of the talks". Even Russia did not criticized Israel when it deported 416 non-military Hamas members from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to no-man's land of southern Lebanon. (Kreutz 2007: 54) Because at that time, Russian leadership was pro-western and sought help from the US to revive its diminishing economy and reform political system under US guidance. But Russia's pro-western policy did no longer exist. The opponents in the Russian parliament criticized Yeltsin and the then foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev's pro-western policy and accused him to ignoring Arabs interests. The heavy criticism from the domestic politics forced President Yeltsin to replace Kozyrev with hard-liner Evgeny Primakov. After the appointment of Primakov as Russian foreign minister, Russia began to play an active role in the Arab-Israeli peace process and sought equal role with the US.

Oslo Peace Agreement, 1993:

The Oslo peace accord, also known as Declaration of Principles (DOP) signed between the state of Israel and the PLO, the representative of Palestinians on September 13, 1991 in Washington DC. The agreement took place after a series of secret negotiations between the two parties conducted secretly in Oslo, Norway. The accord was an outcome of the Madrid conference held in October-November 1991. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, this was the first peace agreement between Israel and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) took place under the mediation of the US and

Russia. The agreement was signed in the presence of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and US President Bill Clinton and it was duly signed by Mahmoud Abbas on behalf of PLO and Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres for the Israel. And as a witness of the agreement, it was signed by US secretary of state Warren Christopher on behalf of US and Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev for the Russia. (Azad 2000:69-70)

The Oslo peace accords made a major breakthrough in the history of Arab- Israel conflict. It was possible due to the Israel's acceptance to PLO as a negotiating partner on behalf of the Palestinians and on the other side PLO's willingness to accept a step-by-step process with no guarantee of where it would end (Haass 1996: 54). By signing of this agreement, both the parties agreed to recognize each other. The PLO recognized Israel's right to existence, accepted United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 and renounced terrorism, on the other hand, Israel recognized the PLO as its negotiating partner on behalf of Palestinians. The Declaration of Principles (DOP) provided for Palestinian self-government in the West Bank and Gaza Strip for the interim period of five years preceded by the withdrawal of Israeli defense forces (IDF) from that region. The agreement also called for the creation of a Palestinian quasi-governmental entity (Palestinian Authority) which would have responsibility for the administration of the territory under its control. During the interim period of five years, the parties would also negotiate on the other core issues like- the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees and border issues. But the negative point of this agreement was that it did not recognize Palestinian self-determination or call for a Palestine state. The remarkable point of this agreement was that it was the first direct, face to face agreement between the Israeli government and PLO (Pressman 2005: 10-11).

Initially, most people of both sides- Israel and Palestine were approved the treaty. But at the same time Palestinians were disappointed because most fundamental issues were hold off for the future, but they supported the accord because there was no alternative. However, some oppositionists were in both sides. In Israel, the leaders of

Likud Party such as Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu were leading figures who were opposing the agreement. Netanyahu stated that if he comes to power, he would not honor the accord. And Jewish settlers also warned of violent resistance to the removal of settlements. On the other hand, hard-liner Palestinian started violent attack against settlers and Israeli soldiers. However, Negotiations over implementation of the interim arrangements were dragged until another was signed in Cairo in May 1994. Then Israeli defense forces withdrew and Palestinian civilian police took over charge in Jericho and the Gaza Strip. Violence from both sides and postponements weakened support for the Oslo Peace Accord, yet the both parties managed to reach a number of partial agreements, including Oslo II, signed at the White House on 28 September 1995. (Azad 2000: 80)

Although the Russia federation was part of the Oslo peace accords as a witness with US and it was duly signed by Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev, but it had taken back seat behind US. Russia allowed US to play key role in the negotiating process. When Kozyrev was foreign minister from 1991 to January 1996, Russia followed pro-western path in the world affairs and it generally played a little role in the West Asia peace process. Russian President Yeltsin characterized this period as a time of “extreme timidity towards the West, whilst allowing relations with the third world to weaken” (Kreutz 2007: 54). An Israeli reporter summed up the feeling in his country about Russia when he wrote that “Moscow was not an active participant in the process, nor is it briefed on developments on a regular basis. The Russians are merely invited to the White House to sign documents already agreed upon, perhaps out of nostalgia for the Madrid conference where Russia was co-sponsor” (Nizameddin 1999: 120).

The Russian policy under Yeltsin failed to gain the general approval among the Russians. Shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union a Russian expert argued that the peace process that began at the Madrid peace conference in 1991, would not prevent Israeli expansion and the US diplomatic activity in the West Asia would “bring to an end the remainder of Russia’s influence”. (Kreutz 2007: 54)

Although Victor Posuvalyuk later explained that “Russian diplomats not only knew about the secret meeting in Oslo, but also actively promoted its successful outcome, but in reality Russia’s role was quite limited. After the secret meeting in Oslo between Israel and PLO that was started on August 20, 1993, Abu Mazen, the PLO representative, informed the Russian government of the historical breakthrough and on August 23, 1993, Victor Posuvalyuk assured him of full Russian cooperation. (ibid: 55)

However, despite of its pro-western policy, it did not deter from its position to encourage Arab countries for the peace negotiating process. After 1993, Palestinians received more sympathy when pro-western liberals began to disappear from the Russian political stage. Following the summit meeting, Yeltsin’s office issued a statement underlining his government’s broader interests by stating that ‘establishing a lasting and fair peace was and remains a strategic priority for Russia in this region of vital importance’ (Nizameddin 1999: 150).

Gaza-Jericho Agreement, 1994

The government of Israel and PLO, the representative of Palestinian, signed Gaza–Jericho Agreement on May 4, 1994 in Cairo, also known as Cairo agreement. The agreement was witnessed by Russian federation along with US and Egypt. The agreement was the follow-up treaty of Oslo Peace Accords in which the details were concluded about the Palestinian autonomy. The Gaza-Jericho Treaty provided for Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho as presumed in the original text of the Oslo I agreement. The agreement took place after a several round of meetings between PLO leader Yasser Arafat and Israeli leaders Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres. In this agreement, detailed provision were mentioned for Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho areas and replaced by the 9000 Palestinian police force. The agreement also contained the provision of appointment of a Palestinian National Authority (PNA) which would take over from the Israeli military administration for managing Palestinian affairs with the exception security and foreign affairs. The agreement also contained a provision of regarding election in Gaza and the whole of West Bank for electing democratically a

Palestinian legislative council by July 1995. As per the agreement, Israel handed over control of the daily administration of Gaza and Jericho to the Palestinians, ending forty seven years of Israeli occupation on May 13, 1994. For the first, Palestinians got an opportunity to express themselves as an independent political authority- a fact not only recognized by the Israel but by the international community as well (Azad 2000: 80-81).

Moscow found it difficult to ignore continuous criticism by political opponents regarding Russia's stance on the Palestinian issue. Therefore it was unsurprising when Yeltsin met with PLO chairman Arafat on April 19, 1994, nearly after one month of signing of Gaza-Jericho agreement between Israel and PLO, and assured PLO that his government would help create a Palestinian police force for the newly established Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Another factor which motivated Russia to support for Arafat since the Oslo peace accord of 1993 was the perception that the PLO leader Arafat represents the moderate forces. Arafat presented himself as democratic, secular and progressive leader of the Palestine and he made genuine efforts to fight Palestinian terrorist groups- a point which he confirmed at the White House agreement signed in October 1998 with Netanyahu. The only other alternative to Arafat was the violent and authoritarian Hamas, which had grown out of the miserable conditions of the Gaza refugee camps. And it would have been difficult for Russian leadership to support Hamas instead of the PLO. In May 1994 Kozyrev clarified Russia's position and offered strong language in support of Arafat. In the light of violent opposition to the peace process, Kozyrev expressed that 'We received him [Arafat] in Moscow, on his visit on the eve of the signing of Gaza-Jericho Agreement, was not simply a gesture of protocol, but was in fact an expression of support him as the top leader' (Nizameddin 1999: 150-152).

By the spring of 1994, Moscow made clear its willingness to increase its involvement in the peace process despite the domestic difficulties the new government was facing. Russian foreign minister Kozyrev stated that 'We have our own worries, a lot of them. But nevertheless it cannot be said that Russia is standing aside'. Kozyrev also claimed that 'it was generally acknowledged that the visits by Arafat and Rabin to Moscow and their meetings with Boris Yeltsin gave a good boost to the work being

carried out' (ibid: 152). Similar view was underlined by Victor Posuvalyuk, special envoy to the Middle East and head of the Russian ministry of foreign affairs for the North Africa and Middle East Department in March 1994; he stated that "Russia occupies its own broad niche in the Middle East region, a niche owing to Russia's unique identity- primarily historical and spiritual- that no one else can lay claim to." (Kreutz 2007: 55)

The Russian foreign ministry described the Gaza-Jericho as first agreement resulting from the process begun at Madrid that included the Soviet Union and now Russia as a critical player. Russia's active participation made the contemporary situation very different from the Camp David era. During the visit of US President Clinton to Moscow in January 1994, the Russian role as co-sponsor was again stressed when the two Presidents issued a joint declaration appreciated the peace process and called for more cooperation. Kozyrev, trying to act as an honest broker between Palestinians and Israelis, seemed determined to assert Moscow's role as an important player, just as Washington moved tried to push the process back on track by itself (Herrmann 1994: 465-466).

Oslo II Agreement of 1995:

On September 24, 1995, the Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat reached an agreement at Taba, on the Red Sea, and four days later, in Washington, on September 28, 1995, they signed on a second major agreement "Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and Gaza Strip", popularly known as Oslo II or Taba Accord, to implement the Oslo 1993 agreements. The agreement was witnessed by the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, US President Clinton, Jordan's King Hussein and representative of Russia.

This agreement set out provisions for the promised Palestinian council elections and divided the West Bank land into three areas- A, B and C. Area A placed under exclusive Palestinian civil and security control, which consists of Palestinian towns and urban areas. Area B was jointly-controlled territory, where Palestine would be responsible for civil authority and Israel would be for overall security, consisted of

Palestinian villages and less populated areas. Area C was exclusively under Israeli civil and security control, consisted of land confiscated by Israel for settlement and roads. Areas A and B respectively represented 7.6% and 21.4% of the West bank and Gaza and covered more than 90% local Palestinian population. Area C covered 71% of the Palestinian territories. In other word, Israel only relinquished approximately 30% of the West Bank to the full or partial control of the Palestinian authority and around 65% of the Gaza Strip. The territorial withdrawals of Oslo II proceeded slowly and were never fully implemented. The both sides repeatedly disagreed on the exact division, timing and agreed-upon withdrawals but Israel was the ruling power and it had the final authority over agreement (Bickerton 2009: 173-174).

Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev's extensive visit to the West Asia at the end of March 1995 gave clear indication that Moscow was willing to play active role in the Arab-Israeli peace process and she would not allow Washington to take efforts unilaterally. Before his departure to the area Kozyrev acknowledged that 'the West Asia peace process is facing great difficulties'. But according to the Russian foreign minister this only made it more necessary for his country to become more involved in finding a solution. While Kozyrev stressed that Moscow's policy to cooperate more closely with Washington, he added that 'it is evident now that the efforts by one co-sponsor are not enough to add dynamism to the processes. In the spring of 1995, Russia showed her strength on the Israeli-Palestinian track when Kozyrev's most senior aide responsible for the West Asia, Viktor Posuvaliuk attempted to meet with Faisal Hussein, a senior PLO official, in east Jerusalem. The status of Jerusalem was, even today, highly sensitive for Israel. However, Russian official went ahead with the planned meeting despite Kozyrev's assurances to Israeli officials that his deputy would not do so (Nizameddin 1999: 152-153).

In the Oslo II agreement of 1995, Russia's active participation as a witness of the agreement showed one step backward to her pro-western policy. Russia welcomed the Arab-Israeli negotiations. A senior Russian official defended Russia's role and argued that it had actually become increasingly prominent since 1991. While he did not deny that

US diplomacy was more active at some phases of the negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis, he added that neither power had the full capability of finding a lasting peace between the two parties. He subsequently noted that ‘the Oslo agreement was a fruit of direct talks between the PLO and Israeli government, concealed from both the US and Russia. According to interviewer Kepechenko, with consideration to the view from Moscow that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was no longer a foremost priority, Russia did not have to be present at every step of events but rather make itself available when its help was needed (Nizameddin 1999: 155).

Hebron Agreement 1997 or Oslo III:

The Hebron protocol was the result of an intensive effort of the US, who determined to save the West Asia peace process, particularly Oslo peace process started in 1993. The Oslo peace accords was in danger since the assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shortly after the signing of the Oslo II agreement and secondly because of defeat of Israeli Labor party in an election in May 1996. In May 1996, Israel’s Likud party led by Benjamin Netanyahu defeated the Labor party led by Shimon Peres in an election. The Likud party’s election campaign was ‘crusade against the peace processes, reigned supreme, and kept the peace process oscillating between a complete collapse and a fresh start. Give source As Hugh Miall, Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse remark, “With a Likud government in power, determined to maintain and extend Israeli control in the occupied territories, the peace process almost ground to a halt. The combination of a spoiler in power on one side and active spoilers in opposition on the other was devastating for further progress. Yet for domestic and international reasons, neither side was willing wholly to reject the Oslo accords. A considerable part of the public on both sides still supported the process, and the violence that might accompany a complete breakdown was a chilling prospect” (Azad 2000: 87).

The Hebron protocol was signed by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat on January 15, 1997 under the supervision of US secretary of state Warren Christopher. The Hebron protocol did not constitute any

new agreement; rather it was the continuation of Oslo II agreement. The “Protocol on redeployment in Hebron” included an annex of the Interim agreement in which security and reciprocity would have fundamental positions, thus make Oslo peace process much favorable to the Israel. The logic behind to highlight these two concepts was that Israel would have the absolute right to withhold withdrawal of forces from the occupied territories in any pretext of its security. Thus, through the revised peace accord, known as Oslo III or the Hebron Agreement, Israel retained the right, following partial deployment from Hebron. In other words, Israel had not bound to withdraw forces from the occupied territories within the meaning of UN Resolution 242. The green signal to such claim was provided by the US that wholeheartedly supported the ‘peace for security’ policy of Israel (Azad 2000: 87-88).

The Russian government, after the appointment of Yevgeny Primakov as foreign minister, showed indication that he is willing to play an important role in the West Asia particularly Arab-Israel peace process. When assuming his office, Primakov stated that Russia’s role in the West Asian peace process was “a minimal part, inadequate to its potential” and that he intended to increase her role (Kreutz 2007: 58). At the end of January 1997, following the Hebron agreement between Israel and Palestinians, the Russian foreign ministry extended a series of invitations for West Asian leaders to visit Moscow, including Yasser Arafat, Benjamin Netanyahu, Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, and Syrian foreign minister Farouk Shara’a. In February 1997, Russian President Yeltsin met Arafat and promised support for the realization of Palestinian national rights including their right to self-determination. But at the same time, Russia was also improving its relations with Israel especially trade relations. In March 1997, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu visited Moscow and warmly welcomed by Yeltsin signaling the continued improvement of relations between two countries. But Russian-Israeli relations setback negative turn due to two reasons in the late summer of 1997. First, Russian supply of missile technology to Iran which angered the Israel and; second, the Israeli-Palestinians peace process had suffered a series of major blows in the summer of 1997 because of Netanyahu’s decision to construct a Jewish neighborhood in east Jerusalem

and to conduct only a minimal (2.7%) withdrawal from the West Bank. On the other hand, and two major Palestinian terrorist attacks carried out in Jerusalem by Hamas in summer 1997 which blows Israeli-Palestinian peace process (Freedman 1998: 159-162).

In the fall of 1997, Russia sought to demonstrate its importance in the West Asia by carrying out a major West Asia initiative which included: first, West Asia tour by Primakov. Primakov rejected the American-Israeli opinion that the “no war, no peace” situation can exist indefinitely as a means of consolidating the existing territorial status quo in the West Asia and that Israeli military superiority can force the Arabs to submit to Israeli dictate (Kreutz 2007: 59); second, the issuance of a statement of principles for solving the Arab-Israeli conflict; and finally, the appointment of a special West Asia envoy (Viktor Posuvalyuk) in the summer of 1997 (Freedman 1998: 162).

Wye Memorandum, 1998:

Like previous agreements since the Oslo peace accord of September 1993, the Wye memorandum was also signed at the White House, Washington DC on October 23, 1998. The agreement signed by the state of Israel and the Palestinian Authority to implement aspects of earlier agreements, notably the interim agreement or Oslo II held on September 28, 1995 and the Hebron protocol of January 15, 1997. The Wye Memorandum greatly surpassed previous agreements in its asymmetry and in the rigidity of the security commitments required of the Palestinian Authority. The Wye memorandum is about implementing Israeli redeployment in the West Bank during the period of five-year interim phase. Although, Hebron Protocol of January 15, 1997 was signed by Netanyahu himself to implement the Israeli redeployment already agreed to in Oslo II, but the Hebron protocol were not carried out either. Hence, the concrete steps and timetable included into the Wye memorandum again for Israeli redeployment (Aruri 1999: 17).

Under the Wye agreement, the land transfer scenario attained a new dimension as for the first time, Israel agreed to transfer 13% land from Area C, the largest portion of the West Bank territory under its control, out of 13%, 1% was to be transferred to Area A

and 12% to Area B. in addition, there had been commitment to transfer 14.2% from Area B, which was under joint Israeli-Palestinian control, to Area A. in the final calculation, upon a total implementation of the Wye agreement, the Palestinians were to have full control over 40% of the total West Bank area (18.2% land of Area A and Area C and 21.8% land of Area B which was under joint control). The withdrawal had to take place in three phases with each phase relevant to PA's performance of certain tasks as per the Israeli direction (Azad 2000: 92-93).

But the implementations of the Wye memorandum never take place. Within a month of signing the accord, and only a minor transfer of land, Netanyahu suspended implementation of the agreement under pressure from the ultra-right parties of Israel (Azad 2000: 93).

Sharm el-Sheikh Memorandum 1999

The unfinished task of Netanyahu government was expected to take up under Ehud Barak government by handling over nearly 11% of the occupied territories in the West Bank to the Palestinian Authority. With the purpose to revise Wye agreement, an agreement was signed by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO chairman Yasser Arafat at Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt on September 4, 1999. The agreement was overseen by US and it was witnessed by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordanian king Abdullah. According to the agreement, the Israeli withdrawal was to take place in three states, all to be completed by January 2000. But Barak government made no substantial progress on the issue of land transfer (Azad 2000: 94-95).

Russia as a co-sponsor in the Arab-Israeli peace process

Russia with the US, the co-sponsor of Arab- Israeli peace talks played a minor role in the Arab-Israeli negotiations. Technically, the co-sponsorship implies an equal role of both actors in terms of influence and activity in the process. The US-Russian

partnership as co-sponsors in the Arab-Israeli peace process is lopsided, tilted towards the US. Russia has accepted as junior sponsor and often symbolic role in the sponsorship of the Arab-Israeli peace talks. The US has been directly or indirectly allowed to play the key role in bringing both parties- Arab and Israel together and setting the agendas and venues for the peace process. Russia's weak role in the peace process can be blamed due to its unstable domestic political situation. The present phase of the Arab-Israel peace process was initiated at the Madrid peace conference which was convened by the US and the then Soviet Union from October 30 to November 1, 1991 and nearly after two months, the Soviet Union collapsed. Russia, the successor state of the Soviet Union is smaller in terms of both in territory and population. And its military power is not strong as like Soviet Union. After disintegration, a weak, confused and smaller Russia take the seat of the Soviet Union in the co-sponsorship of the West Asia peace talks. Up till now, Russia has been worried with challenges to its territorial integrity, its diminishing economy and political instability, and to its decreasing role as superpower in the world. Russia, the new co-sponsor, lacks the political, financial and economic power in comparison to the US. This, in turn, has meant that many Arab countries engaged in the peace process which had viewed the Soviet Union as their ally, their main source of advanced military equipment, and their political patron, have lost their real sponsor in the West Asia peace talks. (Bahbah 1995)

Russia's weak role

Russia's secondary role in the Arab-Israeli peace process has created a serious imbalance in the "co-sponsorship" aspect of the peace process. The US, who is the most trusted ally of Israel, has efficiently become the principal sponsor of the peace talks. The US dominance in the peace talks has resulted in the form of Arabs sacrifice on many issues. This has also meant that Israel and the US are not taking Russia's views and concerns seriously. Even the selection of Washington DC as the venue of bilateral peace talks between Israel and the Arabs reflected the predominant role of US. Although US presented itself as an "honest broker" before Russia and Arab countries in the peace talks, but her actions and hidden word in the agreements shows clearly her policy tilt towards

Israel. The Clinton Administration was undoubtedly most pro-Israeli administration ever in comparison to other US President. This has been demonstrated in the US attitude toward the peace talks, particularly between Israel and the PLO. Finally, the twofold conclusions can be drawn from the analyses: the first is that Russia has effectively played a minor role in its co-sponsorship of the peace talks, and the second is that the US has not fulfilled its role as an honest and fair broker. Its approach is one-sided and in most cases favors Israel. The Russia needs to reassess the function and approach of its co-sponsorship in the Arab-Israeli peace process. (Bahbah 1995)

During the Yeltsin presidency, the Russia had good relationship with Israel and the US as well. In August 1999, president Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin as the prime minister of Russia and surprisingly resigned from the post of president on December 31, 1999. According to the Russian constitution, Vladimir Putin, then prime minister, became acting president of Russia. Because of the early resignation by the Yeltsin, the presidential election held in March 2000. After that he played a pivotal role in revitalizing the country in political and economic sphere.

Chapter III

**Russia's policy towards Arab-Israel conflict under Putin,
2000-2005**

Vladimir Putin became prime minister of Russian federation in the fall of the 1999 and he became acting President on December 31, 1999, when President Boris Yeltsin resigned in a surprising move. Putin won the Presidential election of March 2000 and in 2004 he was reelected for a second term lasting until May 7, 2008. During his Presidential electoral campaign of 2000, he announced that he would “restore the authority of the state and to pursue democratic development”. Although these principles had been growing from last ten years since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, but these principles could be achieved only when liberal values took place in the country. On May 7, 2000, the day of his accession to power, Vladimir Putin declared that he was “aware that I have undertaken a huge responsibility and I am aware that the head of state in Russia has always been and will always be responsible for everything, for everything that is happening in the country.” (Leahy 2000: 633-634)

Russian foreign policy under Vladimir Putin

After coming to power in 2000, Vladimir Putin had formulated his policy to achieve three major objectives: the first objective was to restore Russia’s great power status in the world so as to prevent the US from unilaterally dominating the world; the second objective was to boost the Russian economy so as to Russia again become a great power and the third objective was to check the Islamic radicalism in Russian territory as well as in the world and prevent middle eastern aid to the Chechen rebellion. That’s why Russia had supported US-led war against terrorism and invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 (Freedman 2010: 9).

During his first term in President Office (2000-2004), Vladimir Putin carried out an upgrading of national security, military and foreign policy concepts to ensure Russia’s progress towards a multidirectional, balanced and pragmatic external strategy. And during his second term in office, begun in March 2004, Putin continued to implement his new policy without encountering any serious resistance at home. In his address to the Federal Assembly, he said that “it is important to make the foreign policy serve the comprehensive development and modernization of the country.” (Zakaurtseva: 87-88)

A multidimensional policy was adopted by the Russian President Vladimir Putin to achieve its goal of great power status for the country. In the domestic arena, he wished to unite the people by building on Russian patriotism and national traditions. The new Russia was the successor state of superpower Soviet Union, and it was already made as a great power under President Yeltsin's rule in the 1990s, despite country's weak economy and political turmoil condition of that time. But this claim of great power status, under the President Putin, has become more strident and outspoken. As acting President in December 1999, Putin expressed belief in the greatness of Russia; saying that 'Russia was and will remain a great power and the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence' would be the precondition for that. To addressing the federal assembly in 2005, Putin asserted that 'Russia has been, is and will be a major European nation, where the ideas of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy for many centuries have been determining values', sometimes even ahead of European standards. Putin added that these values have determined the desire to see Russia's state independence grow and its sovereignty strengthened. In other word, Putin wanted to show that Russia's status in the world would depend upon how strong and successful it was in the past (Oldberg 2007).

Vladimir Putin also stressed country's great power claims on various grounds. At the summit of Group-8 (G-8) in 2004, Putin self-praised that 'Russia is one of the world's biggest nuclear powers' and emphasized that any efforts to resolve nuclear issues such as non-proliferation of nuclear weapons would not be complete without Russian participation. In the same way, the then Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov in 2004 told to the all-Arabian television station that Russia was, is and will remain one of the leading world powers because of its size and economic and military potential. It is a permanent member of the UN Security Council and therefore it has a special responsibility for peace and stability' (ibid).

The major objective of Russia's foreign policy under Putin was to create multi-polar world and secure its position as a great power on the world stage. This concept was

developed by former foreign minister Yevgeny Primakov in 1996, which means that fight for a world order in which the US does not dominate and where Russia is one of the poles of power among many. (ibid) The concept further describes Russian foreign policy as balanced and 'multi-vector' as a result of Russia being a vast Eurasian country. It claims Russia bears a responsibility for upholding security both on a global and regional level and is ready for common action. Throughout, priority is given to the adjoining region of post-Soviet states (excluding the Baltic States). Further, the NATO enlargement to this region in 2004 is seen as a serious threat to Russian security. Thus Russia claims a greater say in world politics at the US expense and wants its own zone of influence, an ambition which reminds of the US Monroe doctrine for the Americans. (Oldberg 2010: 3)

Russia exercised its influence in international organizations several times, particularly in the UN Security Council where its membership can be seen as multipolarity in practice and as recognition of great power status. Russia appreciated the importance of UN Security Council, where it has inherited the position as one of five permanent members with a veto right. The veto right gives Russia a special responsibility for peace and stability in the world. For example, Russia has used its veto right to demand that the military actions of the member states must be approved by the Security Council and therefore it opposed NATO's bombing in Yugoslavia and US-led invasion of Iraq. (Oldberg 2007) But it does not mean that Putin adopted an anti-western approach. Putin, at the same time, tried to improve its relations with the US, the only incontestable superpower in the world. Russia supported for the US on its war on terrorism after 9/11 terror attack. The 9/11 terror attack also served as a base to the foundation of NATO-Russia council. Putin and NATO leaders held a meeting in Rome on May 28, 2002 in which they adopted a declaration to the formation of NATO-Russia council (NRC). In the document, NATO and Russia, outlined the main areas of prospective cooperation, such as the fight against terrorism, arms control and threat assessment. (Kulhanek: 151)

The second major objective of Putin's foreign policy was to increase economic potential of the country. He put a great deal of emphasis on improving Russia's economy,

not only through the sale of arms, crude oil and natural gas but also on expanding Russia's business ties abroad. The business interests were played significant role in Putin's foreign policy. Putin stressed much on strengthening the Russian economy with the hope that Russia might regain its great power status through strong economy. (Freedman 2003: 68)

He also emphasized to restore country's military strength which is the driving force of any country's status. In his 1999 programme's statement, Putin also realized that today a great power relies more on advanced technology and high living standards than on military power. During his address to the federal assembly in 2003, Putin stated that Russia will firmly take its place among the truly strong, economically advanced and influential states of the world. In 2004, Putin insisted that his aim is to raise the living standard of the people and strengthen the Russia's position in the world. He also stressed that the strong state power has the similar importance because it is the main driving force of any change and the value of Russian patriotism. Other Russian officials also expressed such type of opinion. For example, foreign ministry official Alexander Orlov had expressed that Russia would never back of asserting its right to play a leading role on the world stage and it would not accept the poor role relative to the west. When western nations criticized that there is the lack of democracy in Russia, then in response, Putin said that Russia builds on its own traditions and will develop them in its own way at its own pace (Oldberg 2007).

The third major objective of Russian foreign policy under Putin was to curb the Islamic terrorism in the Russian territory as well as in the world. With the purpose to fight against international terrorism, President Putin attempts to build up tie with the US, lonely superpower in the world. After the 9/11 terror attack on Washington, Vladimir Putin came in the support of US-led war against terrorism and supported the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001. Russia made central issue of cooperation against terrorism in its relation with other international organizations such as UN, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the NATO-Russia Council and the CIS. In 2004,

Russia was elected to head the Counter-Terrorism Committee of the UN Security Council, and after the Beslan tragedy of 2004 that council supported Russia with sharp condemnation of the terrorists (ibid). Despite the seriousness of the Islamic terrorism, President Putin also realized that Russia faces even more immediate and concrete threats and challenges from the other directions such as extremist Islamic support for Chechen and other separatists and terrorists in the Caucasus; the split in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) after the “color revolutions” in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan; Russia’s own difficulties with some CIS states like Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova; and regional problems in its western part, where there is rapid growth of china’s power coupled with increased immigration of Chinese nationals into sparsely populated and backward regions of eastern Russia that china claimed as her own in the past. (Zakaurtseva: 88-89)

Russian policy towards West Asia under Putin

Russian federation under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin, nearly for a decade, was suffered from economic crises, a violent uprising in Chechnya, political instability, and a confused foreign policy especially focused on US and former republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union. Then Russia, under a new President, Vladimir Putin sought to revive the country’s status of great power which had faded since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. President Vladimir Putin began to refocus the country’s attention on the West Asia, especially during his second term (2004-08) and subsequently as Russia’s prime minister. But it does not mean that Russia had totally neglected this region during the Yeltsin era. The two Middle Eastern country- Turkey and Iran, which bordered the former Soviet republics, got more attention from a defensive point of view rather than the view of an effort to expand Russian influence. In terms of Arab- Israeli conflict, the country was deeply involved, despite of its role secondary to the US, compared to what it had been during Soviet era (Freedman 2010: 11).

After the accession to power in 2000, Russian President Vladimir Putin restored Russia's presence in the Middle Eastern region. He pursued a two track policy towards this region. On the one side, he allowed Russia to develop good diplomatic and economic relations with Israel while at the same time; he keeps on friendly relations with Arab countries, the old ally of former Soviet Union in this region. This non-ideological policy had helped Russia to reclaim its economic and strategic advancement which she had lost aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, Russia has successfully developed good relations and inked diplomatic, military, and energy deals with both Israel and Arab countries without alienating one or the other. (Bourtman 2006)

Putin's policy towards Arab-Israel conflicts:

Russian President Vladimir Putin's accession to power in 2000, reflected in Russia's deeply involvement in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Vladimir Putin's period, in terms of Arab-Israel conflict, can be subdivided into two parts. The first part was from January 2000 to April 2002, and the second was from April 2002 to spring of 2005. The first part was characterized by increasing Russian-Israeli cooperation in every field and a departure from former foreign minister Primakov's "pro-Arab" policy. In the second part, there were no major changes in Russian-Israeli cooperation, but he (Putin) put greater emphasis on the question of Palestinian rights and criticized continued Israeli settlement in the occupied territories. (Kreutz 2007)

During the Yeltsin years (1991-99), Russian-Israeli relations were relatively good, especially in terms of trade. But it was stabilized during the Yevgeny Primakov's tenure as foreign minister (1996-98) and prime minister (1998-99). Strongly pro-Arab, Primakov sought to shift Moscow's policy once more into the Palestinian camp. But Putin's accession to power signaled the departure from the earlier Primakov's policy. (Katz 2005: 51)

During his five years in power, Putin has worked to upgrade Russia's relations with Israel. Nevertheless, many issues remain caused tension between two countries. Israel remains upset with Moscow's continuing support for Iran's nuclear program. Russian companies remain the main contractors behind the Iranian nuclear reactor at Bushehr. In 1995, Tehran and Moscow signed a US\$800 million deal in which the Iranian government purchased a reactor and 2,000 tons of uranium. The Putin administration also continued Russia's traditionally warm relationship with Syria. The Russian government continues to sell Syria arms. The Israeli security establishment fears that any weapons sold to Syria might fall into the hands of Hezbollah. During his October 2002 trip to Moscow, Sharon raised the issue with Putin but failed to get Moscow's commitment to halt these activities. (Katz 2005: 51)

After 2002, Moscow made more visible efforts to increase its cooperation with Arab countries. The reason for these changes in Russian foreign policy can be seen at both regional and global levels. After 2002, President Putin felt stronger politically and more self-confident than ever had since the collapse of the Soviet Union. He had been disappointed by Washington's unilateralism and become more eager to revive the country's great power status, to seek equal role with the US in global affairs. And an Arab-Israel conflict was, even today, an arena where he sought an equal role with the US, who claims its domination in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Russia also needed Arab and Muslim support because of its Islamic domestic minorities, which includes the Chechens (Kreutz 2007).

In January 2000, when Putin was an acting President accepted Arafat's invitation to visit Palestine. Putin expressed his readiness to visit "as soon as the circumstances allow him to make use of Arafat's kind invitation. He also assured Arafat that under his leadership, "Russia will continue to work invariably for the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, which can be achieved only through the restoration of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people". Putin's letter to Arafat was

released on the eve of multilateral peace talks on the Middle East held in Moscow, where he affirmed his continuous support to the peace process (ibid).

The parties for the multilateral peace talks included US and Russia as co-sponsors, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, the Palestinian authority, Israel, EU, Norway, Canada, Japan, China and Switzerland. The multilateral talks worked in five sections on the issues of regional economic development, refugees' problems, arms control, regional security and the environment. Syria and Lebanon boycotted the Moscow meeting, which started on February 1, 2000. In his addressing to the meeting, Putin stated that "Russia is linked by historic, spiritual, commercial and economic ties with the West Asia region. First of all, there exists geographic proximity. Putin insisted that he was mainly concerned that if the Arab-Israeli confrontation continued, Islamic militancy may spread to the former Soviet Muslim republics and even to some parts of Russia itself, particularly in the northern Caucasus. Although Palestinian and other Arab leaders looked upon Russia with the hope for a new initiative, but their expectations were not fulfilled and the Moscow meeting ended in a deadlock. Arab states were not ready to cooperate with Israel before the settlement of the Palestinian questions, even though Israel wanted to normalize its relations with Arab countries even if the peace process did not progress (ibid).

President Putin supported peace process in the Middle East because of its geographical proximity to the Russia and to gain economic advantage. Moscow sees the Arab-Israel conflict as an opportunity to increase its resurgence in the region. Its role as the co-sponsor of the peace process initiated by the Madrid peace conference has allowed Russia to cooperate with both nations and gained economic advantages. Putin kept himself away from traditional Russian moral approach and sympathy towards the Palestinians while declaring political, moral and historical responsibility for the peace process. (ibid) He attempts to maintain the same distance from both- Israelis and the Palestinians and to get benefits from both relationships. In view of Russian ruling elite, Israel is most desirable ally for Russia in the Middle Eastern region. Both countries

shared cultural links due to a large Russian Diaspora in Israel and both countries are facing the threat of Islamic terrorism. On the other hand, traditional links with the Arab world and the Palestinians are still important to Moscow because they provide Russia with unique access to this region otherwise that would be completely dominated by the Americans (ibid).

On March 9, 2000, the Russian ambassador to Israel, Mikhail Bikdanov visited the headquarters of the Palestinian movement at Orient House in Jerusalem to reaffirm Russia's commitment to supporting the Palestinians in their legitimate right to self-determination. He also indicated that the Jerusalem issue should be solved by bilateral negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians and "any unilateral actions in the city must be stopped." By the end of June 2000, the Russian deputy foreign minister, Vasily Sredin, who was also the President's special envoy to the Middle East, visited Israel and Palestinian territories. During his meeting with Arafat, he assured him that "Moscow still support for the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including their rights to self-determination and creation of a state of their own." (ibid)

Camp David Summit, 2000 and Russia's absence:

The Camp David summit of 2000 was the result of intensive effort of the US President Bill Clinton, intended to break the impasse over the peace process, caused mainly due to several flaws in Israeli withdrawal policy from the occupied territory and a total absence of "final status issues" along the period of negotiations started from Oslo I to recent summit. Also, Arafat's observation that he would unilaterally declare an independent Palestine state in September 2000 aroused new concern among international community with respect to the future of the on-going peace process in the Middle East. However, on September 13, 2000, Yasser Arafat postponed the plan of unilateral declaration of an independent Palestinian state (Azad 2000: 106).

In July 2000, the US President Bill Clinton sought to address the "final status issues" including border settlement, status of Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees between

Israel and Palestine that Oslo accords had left on one side for later negotiation. With this purpose, the US President Clinton convened a talk between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat. The trilateral summit held at Camp David from July 11 to July 25, 2000 famously known as Camp David summit of 2000 between Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, PLO chairman Yasser Arafat and US President Bill Clinton. In this summit, the US President Clinton openly sided with Israel. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's proposals were bold and far-reaching as no other Israeli leader had ever gone further. In effect, he offered the Palestinians a contiguous area comprising over 90% of the West Bank, a Palestinian capital in part of Jerusalem, some kind of shared sovereignty on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount, and the return of refugees to a Palestinian state, but not to Israel. Barak's offer over Jerusalem marked a major shift for the Israelis. Realizing that how far Ehud Barak had come and offered to the Palestinians, US President Clinton started campaign on behalf of him and tried to convince PLO leader Arafat. President Clinton tried to lure Arafat by pledging to raise tens of billions of dollars for Palestine. But Arafat had argued from the start of the summit that the summit was premature. He was being pressured into accepting what for the Palestinian leader were fundamental issues. He argued that Israeli offer held out no hope for the refugees who saw their homes as lying within Israel's pre-1967 border. Arafat accused Clinton and Barak for asking him to settle for less than the 22% land of Palestine which had been left after the war of 1948-49. (Fraser 1995)

Finally, compromise formulas over Jerusalem proved elusive. The summit was failed without reaching to any agreement, although the negotiations were more detailed than ever before. As a result of the summit, the Palestinian leader proved immune to the argument that this was the best offer he was likely to get. The Clinton and Barak blamed Arafat for the failure of the summit. They accused Arafat for his rigidity and not being flexible. (ibid)

The basic problem of the summit was that the Israel's maximum offered was very less than the minimum the Palestinians could accept. Israel offered the Gaza Strip, a large

part of the West Bank and extra land from the Negev desert, while keeping major settlement blocks and most of East Jerusalem. It also proposed Islamic guardianship of key sites in the Old City of Jerusalem and offered to contribute fund for the settlement of the Palestinian refugees. But the Palestinians wanted to start with a reversion to the red lines of 1967, offered the Israelis rights over the Jewish quarter of the Old City and wanted recognition of the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees (BBC News).

Although Russia had not been invited for the Camp David summit of 2000 between the US, Israel and Palestinian Authority, but Russia had played a major role to keep situation normal between Israel and Palestine and the middle east as a whole. Since 1999, Russia's efforts was to deter Palestinian leader Arafat from going ahead with his plan to proclaim an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital on September 13, 2000. When on August 10, 2000, Arafat came to Moscow on a working visit, Ivanov asked Arafat to exercise "extreme caution" on the timing of his decision to declare an independent Palestinian state unilaterally. During their talks, the Russian leaders were convincing Arafat to postpone the declaration of Palestinian independence, promising him that Moscow would assist Palestinians in negotiations with Israel in exchange (Kreutz 2007: 69-70).

The Russian stand was greatly appreciated by the Israeli and the Americans. Israel considered it as a great importance in the Middle East peace, because Russia had traditionally taken pro-Arab position. Moscow naturally welcomed the PLO's executive council's decision to call off the declaration of an independent Palestinian state on September 13, 2000. (ibid: 70)

The policy which has evolved towards West Asia and to urge Palestinians to keep situation normal, ultimately made Israel to satisfy with his position. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak described the Russian position as 'constructive and realistic' and asked Moscow to continue to play its role in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Despite these assurances from Israeli side and numerous appeal by the Palestinians and

other Arabs for more active Russian involvement in the dispute settlement process, President Putin, citing the absence of a formal Israeli invitation, decided to stay away from a new Middle East summit at Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt held on October 17, 2000. Putin's decision reflected in the Moscow's loss of great power status, and it was caused by his wish to avoid confrontation with the US and Israel while not alienating the Palestinians and the Arabs. (ibid: 70)

Sharm al-Sheikh summit, October 2000:

Understanding the violent situation aroused since the breakup of second intifada, President Clinton called a summit on October 17, 2000, at Sharm al-Sheikh involving the Israeli and Palestinian Authority as well as the Americans, Egyptians, Jordanians, the UN and the EU, tried to chart a way forward. The US President Clinton announced an international fact-finding committee that had the responsibility to report on 'the events of the past weeks and how to prevent their recurrence.' The committee was chaired by US senator George Mitchell comprising EU's Javier Salona, Turkish President Suleyman Demirel, Norwegian foreign affairs minister Thorbjørn Jagland, and former senator Warren B. Rudman. But when it reported on April 30, 2001, the political leadership had been changed in both countries- Israel and the US. The new US President George W. Bush showed little interest in the Middle East. Representatives of the Israel and Palestine Authority met to explore Mitchell report at Taba, Egypt in January 2001 (Fraser 1995: 156).

Russian President Putin decided not to attend or send Russian representatives to the October 2000 Sharm el-Sheikh summit. Because he had been disappointed with the US unilateralism and decided to avoid any process in which the US dominated. At the same time, the Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov made clear that the Russian government would oppose any UN Security Council resolution authorizing a UN peacekeeping force for the West Bank and Gaza so long as Israel opposed it. Nevertheless, in March 2001, Russia voted in favour of a resolution to dispatch

international observers to Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Russia repeated the pattern in September 2003 when the Security Council considered a resolution demanding that Israel not expel Arafat from the West Bank and Gaza. The United States vetoed the resolution while Russia voted in favour. However, Russia mitigated its traditional pro-Arab position with subsequent statements complaining that the Security Council vote had been “rushed”. (Katz 2005)

Taba Summit, January 2001:

The Israeli and Palestinian representative held a meeting from 21 to 27 January 2001 at Taba on the red sea to discuss on the Mitchell report, famously known as Taba summit. In contrast to the Camp David summit, where the US played a preponderant role, no outsiders participated in the Taba summit. The Israeli delegation led by foreign minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, included Yossi Beilin, Israel Hassoun, Amnon Lipkin-Shahak, Yossi Sarid, and Gilad Sher. The Palestinian delegation was headed by Ahmad Qurai, speaker of the Palestinian council, included Yasir Abid Rabbuh, Hassan Asfour, Muhammad Dahlan, Saeb Erakat, and Nabil Shaath. (Special Document File: The Taba negotiations: 79)

The aims of the Taba talks were to reach the "final status" negotiations and to settle down the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On January 27, 2001, the final day of the talks, a joint statement issued by the negotiators claimed they came closer to reaching a final settlement than any previous or subsequent peace talks. The Taba talks included “final status” issues like territory, status of Jerusalem, refugees and security in order to find ways to come to joint positions. The talks were called off by Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak on January 27, on the eve of the Israeli election held on February 6, 2001. (ibid: 79-80)

Russia's role:

Although Russian leadership, formally, had not been attended the Sharm el-Sheikh summit of October 2000, but Russian officials have frequently visited the Middle East and occasionally hosted Palestinian leaders including Arafat, who visited Moscow at least three times (in August 2000, November 2000, and May 2001), after the breakdown of the US-sponsored negotiations. During Arafat's visit to Moscow in November 2000, Putin praised Arafat for his peacemaking efforts but also mentioned "the great contribution to the settlement process made by the Israeli leaders" with whom Moscow was in constant contact. (Kreutz 2007) In fact, at this meeting Putin arranged an Israeli-Palestinian "virtual summit" in his office, when he telephoned the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and handed the receiver to Arafat. After a long time both leaders spoke directly to each other. The Russians considered their mediation to be a great political success, but Russia's contribution to the peace, as described by Andrei Piontkovsky, Director of the Centre for Strategic Studies in Moscow, was as mainly 'symbolic' (Kreutz 2007).

When Arafat next visited to Moscow in May 2001, President Putin and foreign minister Igor Ivanov observed the principle of "equal proximity to the two parties to the conflict." Arafat requested Putin to involve greatly as co-sponsor of the Middle East peace process. Putin and Ivanov stressed that the Russian and US positions on the Middle East settlement were "close or identical." When Yevgeny Primakov, (then leader of the Fatherland-All Russia parliament group at the State Duma) blamed Israel for worsened condition in the occupied territories, the Kremlin expressed disagrees with his views and stated that Russia is in a role of mediator and should not take side of any parties. Primakov was also harshly attacked by the pro-Israeli media for his comments (Kreutz 2007).

The Israeli leaders appreciated the Putin's policy. When Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres visited Moscow in May 2001, he informed Putin: "Your policies meet our

expectations.” Then Israeli prime minister also shared same opinion when he met Russian President Putin in September 2001, said “the Russians have no desire to replace the US as mediators. Their position is much closer to the American one than the European one- the Russians are not pressuring us to bring international observers.” Russia also concerned about the safety of Russian language Diaspora in Israel in the wake of an outbreak of the second intifada in September 2000. According to popular Russian expectations, Russian Jews in Israel could serve as a “unique bridge, linking Russia and the West in science and technology.” In fact, there have been number of examples of Russian-Israeli business and technological ventures and cooperation. Russian launch vehicles were employed on two Israeli satellites in 1998 and 2000. In addition, the trade between two countries rose by 50%, amounting to over US\$ 1 billion, from 1995 to 2000 (Kreutz 2007).

Russia’s approach towards Arab-Israel conflicts after 9/11 terror attack:

Within the month of the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa intifada, the hard-line Likud Party led by Ariel Sharon came to power in Israel. The new Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon adopted strict policy towards Palestinians in order to crush on-going Al-Aqsa intifada. The Sharon’s policy consisted of a series of harassment measures and collective punishment with regard to the Palestinian civilian population: encirclement of Palestinian towns in Areas A; quasi-permanent controls along the roadways and around the villages in Areas B; ban on travel between the West Bank and Gaza; separation of East Jerusalem from its hinterland around Bethlehem and Ramallah; destruction of Palestinians homes and pre-planned assassinations of targeted individuals etc. The policy continued till September 11, 2001 when world saw the dangerous face of terrorism. (Mansour 2002: 5-6).

Immediately after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon at Washington, the US sought to build a coalition including Arab states against Osama Bin Laden and his Al-Qaeda terror organization. In an effort to gain support of

Arab countries, the US affirmed her support for a Palestinian statehood. Before September 11, the US administration was following pro-Israeli policy with regard to Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The US President Bush also pursued Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to agree to a meeting between Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres and Arafat to establish yet another ceasefire between both sides. (Freedman 2005)

After the 9/11 terror attack at Washington, the Russian President expressed his support to the US on her 'war on terror' and moved to form a tactical alliance with the US because the Taliban in Afghanistan were as much a threat to Russia and its ally in Central Asia as were to the US. Russian President Putin supported US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and promised to provide weapons to the NATO in Afghanistan. He also offered Russian Airspace to US airplanes for humanitarian flights, and to participate in search and rescue operations. When the leaders of the Central Asian states offered airbases to the coalition forces for the attack on Afghanistan, Putin announced that he had approved. But Putin opposed US invasion of Iraq in 2003. (Light 2008: 29)

The 9/11 terror attack at Washington had far-reaching impact on Arab-Israel conflict. As mentioned above, after the 9/11 terrorist attack at Washington, US President Bush and his principal ally British Prime Minister Tony Blair, affirmed their support for Palestinian statehood to seek the Arabs support for Afghanistan expedition. (Fraser 1995).

This tensed situation for the US indirectly helped Russia's position in the Arab-Israeli confrontation and Middle Eastern region as a whole. Same day on October 18, 2001, the Israeli cabinet minister and well-known Russian-Israeli politician, Nathan Sharansky, visited Moscow and found "an absolute understanding, even though not complete solidarity for the operation." Moreover, when Israeli President Moshe Katzav visited Russia in January 2001 also received remarkable impressions from the talks with the Russian leaders and spoke about immense prospects for Israeli-Russian cooperation. While many official and unofficial leaders of western European countries sharply

criticized Israeli military actions and repression against Palestinians during the second intifada. Russian leaders called both parties- Israel and Palestinian, to resolve their issues peacefully. With the exception of a small number of left-wing and nationalist papers, most of the Russian media were (and still are) generally more pro-Israeli than in Western Europe. And the Russian people also remained largely detached and neutral about the on-going events in the West Asia (Kreutz 2007: 72).

Similarly, the foreign minister of Tunisia, Habib Ben Yahya, may have spoken for many when he said, “the Arab nations regard Russia as an important catalyst of regional peace and hope that Russia will use all its weight as co-sponsor of the middle east peace process, to find a final settlement to the problem in keeping with international law and with the UN resolutions.” But the Russian response to these requests had been cautious. From the beginning of the second intifada, Moscow had condemned Palestinian violence and called on the Palestinian leadership to put an end to extremism. (ibid: 72)

However, on December 15, 2001, President Putin warned Israel for her policy towards Palestinians and stressed that “making a blockade, the bombing on Palestinian territories, the introduction of Israeli troops into Palestinian towns, and passing sentences without trial, will not likely provide a clue to the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation. Furthermore, Moscow supported the George Mitchell Commission’s peace plan and on numerous occasions Russian leaders have asserted that their country remains firmly in favour of the Middle East peace process. (ibid: 72)

In his address to the Arab league meeting in Beirut on March 26, 2002, President Putin summarized the essentials of Russian proposals for the Middle East peace settlement. He stated that “Peace can only be achieved in the middle east by ending the occupation of the Arab territories, the realization of the national rights of the people of Palestine, including their right to self-determination and the creation of their own independent state, and also the equal and reliable security of all the countries and nations of the region, both the Arabs and the Israelis.” Therefore President Putin and other

Russian officials opposed Israel's efforts to isolate or even eliminate Palestinian leader Arafat. On April 7, 2002, when Israel moved to siege the Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah, President Putin strongly criticized the Israelis move and said that "Arafat is an internationally recognized leader, who commands respect and influence in the Arab world, and first of all, in Palestine. And for any talk on the Middle East settlement requires a partner, and if there is no second partner in the talks, one is left with only one option- force." (ibid: 73)

In April 2002, the Israel's move to close Jenin and its surrounding areas to the media and relief organizations caused a strong reaction in Russia. The Russian foreign minister, Igor Ivanov stated to the Russian media: "the refugee camp was completely flattened and nobody can tell now how many victims are buried under the debris..... Clearly such developments cannot be accounted for, and even less justified as any resistance to terrorism." On April 24, 2002, the Russian State Duma criticized the Israelis actions and asked Israeli leaders to 'shut down the violence immediately' and warned that if Israel would not obey the international demands and continuously ignored it, there would be serious step including economic and other actions can be taken against it." In the subsequent years, Russia's policy diverged towards the Palestinians more from those of Israel and the US. In the subsequent years in 2003 and 2004, Russian as a member of the Quartet, focused on four major differences: first, the status and importance of Yasser Arafat both before and after his death; second, the international legality and political acceptability of the "separation fence" which Israel has built in the occupied territories; third, the legal nature of the road map proposed by the Quartet to solve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the means of its implementation; fourth, Condemnation of Israel's use of excessive military force and repression in the occupied territories and its need to make at least some tangible concessions for the beleaguered Palestinians. (ibid: 74)

The Role of four major actors in the Arab-Israel conflicts

The failure of the Camp David summit of July 2000 and subsequently outbreak of the second intifada or Al-Aqsa intifada in the late September 2000 forced international community to give attention on the burning issue of Arab-Israel conflict which has been disturbed the entire Middle Eastern region and world as a whole. For the first time in the history, four major players- the US, UN, the European Union and Russia came together to solve the Arab-Israel conflicts, the most burning issue of the world since 1948. The group of these four major players met together and formed a permanent forum in Madrid in 2002 sometimes known as 'Quartet'. The main focus of the Quartet members was to pursue a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the active participation of the external actors. (Musu 2007: 2-3)

Roadmap for peace

The Road Map for peace was jointly prepared by the quartet members namely the US, the EU, the Russian Federation and the UN formed in 2002. The US asked European Union and the UN, for the first time, to involve in formulation of the peace process for the West Asia. It seems that US took this initiative for gaining international support for the run-up to war in Iraq. Anyway, this was the most multilateral effort to resolve the violent Israeli-Palestinian confrontation and resume the political process that interrupted in early 2001 since the wake up of the Al-Aqsa intifada. Several peace plans were proposed before it, for example, the Mitchell Report, the Tenet Plan and most importantly, US President Bush's speech of June 24, 2002 that called for a final status agreement in which Israel and an independent Palestinian state live side by side in peace. George Bush mentioned in his speech, an independent Palestinian state must be preceded by an end of violence and a change in Palestinian leadership. (Special Documents: The Road Map: 83)

The road map is a composite document prepared by the Quartet members namely the US, the EU, Russia and the UN. As per the nature of the making-body, the document reflects a complex and uncomfortable compromise between its members on various issues. On the issue of political progress upon Palestinian political reform and an end to the violence, the three members of the Quartet other than US, effectively bowed to Washington's demand. And on the other issues of the road map regarding reciprocal Israeli obligations, the need for monitoring, providing a role for the Quartet and defining the end-state, the US seems to have moved somewhat in the direction of its Quartet partners. The road map is a set of important points that are well-prepared and balanced exhortations to both parties such as end the violence; stop settlement activity in the occupied territory; reform Palestinian institutions; accept Israel's right to exist; establish a sovereign Palestinian state and reach a final settlement on all issues by 2005. The destination of final settlement of Israeli-Palestinian dispute by 2005, as presented in Bush's speech of June 24, 2002 was welcomed by the EU, Russia and the UN. (ibid: 85)

Russia's role in the 'Road Map for Peace':

Russia, as a member of the Quartet, played major role in the formation of the 'road map for peace'. Russia opposed US when she tried to enforce her decision. For example, when US President George W. Bush, in 2003, urged other states to join the US and Israel in shunning Arafat to force the Palestinians to select a more pliant leader, this move was flatly opposed by Russia. And Russia's stance was reflected during the visit of Russian foreign minister's middle east envoy, Aleksander Kalugin to the Cairo on October 11, 2003 where he stated that Russia considered, "Yasser Arafat as the chairman of the Palestinian Authority and maintains contacts with him in this capacity and as the legally elected head of the organization". (Kreutz 2007: 74)

Russia with the other members of the Quartet namely the US, the EU and the UN, adopted the road map to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to establish an independent Palestinian state by 2005. Here, Russia was more active than the US in

persuading the both parties to provide the situation for the practical implementation of the road map proposals. Despite the Israelis opposition, expressed during Israeli's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to Moscow on November 3, 2003, Russia introduced a draft resolution to the UN Security Council, called UN Security Council resolution 1515 that approved the Road map proposals and asked the both parties- Israelis and Palestinians to meet their road map commitments and cooperate with the Quartet. This resolution was also co-sponsored by China, Guinea, Spain, and Great Britain and unanimously adopted on November 9, 2003. The Arabs world and Palestinian welcomed the UN Security Council resolution 1515 and praised Moscow for her major diplomatic achievements. (ibid: 75)

On the other hand, Israeli government reacted negatively to the resolution 1515 and expressed that it did not feel bound by the resolution because it did not involve the US pressure for supporting the issues. And without the US pressure, the new resolution had no practical importance. Despite the little success of the resolution, Russia's position remains unchanged on the issue of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On December 3, 2003, the Russian ambassador to the UN, Sergei Lavrov, asked that while the Palestinian leadership must adopt effective measures "to prevent the actions of extremists and terrorists..... Israel on its part, should reject the non-proportional rise of force and non-judicial reprisals, and take effective steps to ease the economic hardship of the Palestinian people who are living through an acute humanitarian disaster." He added that "Israel's right to self-defense should be observed in the context of generally recognized international humanitarian standards." (ibid: 75)

Although the US government expressed reservations towards the Israeli construction of the "separation fence" in the occupied territories, the American position was ambiguous. Russia expressed stronger opposition to the fence and linked it with negative assessments of the Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On October 3, 2003, the Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov in his statement, asserted that settlement activity including the construction of "security fence" which is dividing

the Palestinian lands and local peoples, must be stopped. The EU also adopted the same position as was Russia on the issue of Israeli settlement activity in the occupied areas. The EU, on November 18, 2003, also called on Israel to stop the construction of security fence in the West Bank, and stressed that it would not solve the problems rather it would worsen the conditions of Palestinians more. But Russia's position became weak when US vetoed on UN Security Council resolution, which condemned the Israelis activity in Palestine, including the building of security fence in the West Bank. Russia expressed regret to the Palestinians. (ibid: 75-76)

Russia's approach towards Iraq war and Arab-Israel conflict:

The Iraq war of 2003 or second Gulf Crisis reflected the authoritarian nature of the US and its major ally Britain. Unlike the first Gulf Crisis of 1991, the international community was not supported the US in this war. The US President George W. Bush spread false message among world community that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein have kept weapons of mass destruction (WMD), posed a threat to the security. He also misinterpret Iraq's role in Israeli-Palestinian conflict. On February 26, 2003, US President Bush made a speech linked his policies on Iraq to the prospects for progress on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. The scenario presented by him was that the removal of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein would deprive terrorist network of a patron, and hence encourage Palestinians to choose new leaders, 'leaders who strive for peace'. As the threat of terror was removed, Israel would be expected to support the creation of a viable Palestinian state and to bring an end to settlement activity. (Fraser 1995: 169)

On March 14, 2003, the last attempts of diplomatic solution to the Iraq crisis being played out in the UN when George W. Bush made his much-awaited statement on his 'roadmap' to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict. He confirmed his support for an independent Palestinian state, which abandons the use of terror, and he also asked Israelis to end settlement activities and take concrete steps to support the emergence of a sovereign Palestinian state. Once the Palestinian prime minister took charge in the office,

the roadmap would be presented to the both governments. The US, according to him, will be the active partner of every party that seeks true peace. The role of the other members of the 'Quartet' was less clear, but the hidden idea behind this approach was in no doubt. The following week, on March 19, 2003 the US and British forces attacks on Iraq to remove the Saddam Hussein's government. On April 9, Iraq had fall under the American forces, and although the reconstruction of Iraq promised to be a long and costly affair, the toppling of Saddam's government meant that the unveiling of the roadmap could not be long delayed (Fraser 1995: 169-170).

The final element took place on April 29 when the Palestinian parliament voted to confirm Mahmoud Abbas as prime minister. The following day the Americans released the text of the 'performance-based roadmap to a permanent two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict' that had its aim of a final and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by 2005 (Fraser 1995: 170).

Russian President Vladimir Putin strongly condemned the US attacks on Iraq and said that any military operation must be approved by the UN Security Council. Putin did not question about the goals of the war, nor did he counter the false arguments given by the US administration as grounds for the Iraqi war. He just called for national sovereignty and integrity to be respected and international law to be observed before any move, and he added that only the UN Security Council has the authority to reach a reasonable decision over Iraq. Vladimir Putin adopted this attitude just before the Azores summit, at which the US President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair and Spain's Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar gave final ultimatum to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, having failed to get the support of the Security Council. At that time Putin had fastened himself with French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who also criticized the behavior of the US. Like the German and French heads of government, he presents himself as a defender of the foundations of post-war order against American imperialism. However, within Russian ruling elite a certain consensus had developed that while it did not support the US in Iraqi war, it also did not approve of

breaking with America in favour of an alliance with Europe. For example, Leonid Slutski, Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Committee for International Affairs, declared, “If Russia moved toward an anti-American tripartite alliance with France and Germany.... this tactically favorable step would lead to a strategic defeat.” (Volkov 2003)

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In contrast to America and Europe, there were no mass protests in Russia against the Gulf war- not because the people supports the war, but because not a single political party, including the liberal democrats and the nationalist-Stalinist Communist Party of Gennady Zyuganov, has condemned the motives behind the American attack on Iraq. (ibid)

The Russian nationalists propose various scenarios for how the war could be used to stabilize Russian geopolitical influence. The notorious right-wing leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky has already declared: “We should behave worse than the Americans.” He has called alternately for Russia to send a massive military force to the Middle East, to establish pro-Russian regimes in the Transcaucasia and Central Asia, and to crush the

Baltic States economically. By these and other means he proposes to elevate Russia once again to the rank of a superpower. Zhirinovsky said, "Of course we are sorry for Iraq but the Iraq war is a great moment for Russia." However, Vladimir Putin appeared in a role of a peacemaker. He condemned the ultimatum came out from the Azores summit and justified his attitude with the fact that over 20 million Muslims live in Russia. "We cannot ignore their opinion," he declared, without regard for the fact that in Iraq it is not the fate of a religious regime, but a secular one, that is at stake. (ibid)

Russia and the Arab-Israel conflict after the Iraq war of 2003

The Russia's relation with the US was soured following the invasion of Iraq in 2003 as was Russia-Israeli relations. At the same time, there was clear improvement in Russian-Palestinian relations. Moscow's policy tilts towards Palestinians became clear after the Israeli reentry into the West Bank following a series of Palestinian terrorist attacks in 2002. Moscow's pro-Palestinian policy was also guided by its aim to curb Arab support for the Chechen rebellion. But at the same time, Russia was also improving bilateral tie with the Israel. By the early 2000, the trade between the two countries had risen to more than \$1 billion per year, cultural relations continued to develop, 50,000 Russian tourists were visiting Israel annually, and Russia and Israel signed an agreement under which Russian rockets would put Israeli satellites into orbit. However, on the issue of Russian aid to Iran, Israeli construction of security fence and Russia's intension to sell sophisticated missiles to Syria, Russia and Israel had opposing positions. (Freedman 2010: 23)

Russia-Israeli relationship had never fully developed that became evident during Sharon's visit to Moscow. During the visit of Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon to Moscow, Putin promised him to take Israeli concerns into account while introducing a UN Security Council resolution codifying the roadmap for peace prepared by four major players (the UN, the US, the EU and Russia). However, when Russia introduced the resolution, it did not take Israeli concerns. As far as Yasser Arafat was concerned, Israel

had refused to talk to the Palestinian leader in 2002, blaming him for the wave of terror attacks during the Al-Aqsa intifada. By contrast, Putin continued to assert that Arafat is internationally recognized leader of the Palestinians. On the issue of Israeli security wall, Russia joined the majority of EU states in voting to support a UN general assembly (non-binding) resolution condemning Israel for building the barrier and calling on Israel to comply with the majority decision of the International court of Justice. The US and six other countries opposed the resolution. (Freedman 2010: 53-54)

Putin's second term in office (2004-2008)

During the second term in President Office, Vladimir Putin accelerated Russia's involvement in the Middle East. During second term, he adopted more pro-Arab policy and relations with the Palestinians improved. In April 2005, Russian President Putin visited Israel and Palestinian authority as part of his Middle East tour. The day before his arrival, Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon displayed great political foresight by predicting that Russia would return to the region as an active player. Sharon said that "I do not believe the western world is completely aware of Russia's national pride, of its desire to rebuild its role as a global leader..... I understand this; they definitely want to make a comeback." He added that "I do not believe that Russian leaders want to play the same role as the USSR played between 1955 and the mid-seventies." However, he emphasized that Russia definitely "want to become an influential power and want to take a balanced approach". It was the first time that a Russian head of state had visited Israel and the next day, Putin became first world leader to visit Palestinian authority in Ramallah since Mahmud Abbas become Palestinian leader on January 2005. Vladimir Putin expressed his support to the Palestinians and said, "All questions regarding the final status of the Palestinian territories, borders, refugees, the status of Jerusalem, water resources and other issues of mutual importance should only be resolved at the negotiating table." (Kreutz 2007: 76)

In 2005, President Putin called an international peace conference in Moscow to reach a settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But western partners not welcomed it

warmly and their promises for technical assistance to strengthen the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus could not be implemented due to Israeli opposition. Vladimir Putin's visit to Israel and Palestine was symbolic and amounted to waving the flag, but his visit was an indication of Russia's undiminished interest in the Arab-Israeli peace process. (ibid: 76)

The terror attack of September 11, 2001 at Washington brought all major countries of the world together to fight against the common enemy. Russian president Putin supported the US in its 'war on terror'. At the same time, the world community realized that all major disputes of the world including the Arab-Israel conflict must be resolved through political means. With the purpose to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute, the four major actors of the world namely the UN, the US, the EU and Russia came together and formed a forum to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict within a time period.

Chapter IV

Role of External Actors in the Arab-Israel conflict and Russia's perception

The West Asia region as mentioned in the earlier chapters has been a region of confrontations and interstate conflicts that is also dominated with internal disturbance. Being a region dominated by Muslim population, it has given rise to many influential regional players especially in the post cold war era. Among these influential players in the region apart from Russia and the US, are the EU, Iran and Turkey which have carved a position in establishing itself as powerful actors in the region.

European's interests in the West Asian region:

There are several factors which pursued European's to involve in the West Asian region: first, the EU is interested in this region because of economic interest that included energy resources; second, because of Mediterranean proximity. Some countries of the West Asia and North Africa shared Mediterranean Sea with some European countries. Thirdly, due to demographic link, particularly the presence of huge number of people from West Asian states in Europe. Fourth, because of security reasons, European countries are worried of the religious extremism of this region and they need to neutralize threats coming from the region such as religious extremism and international terrorism, the smuggling of drugs, weapons, uncontrollable population migrations etc. (Naumkin: 6)

The Role of EU in the Arab-Israeli conflict: Russia's perception

Besides of Russia and the US, the EU played an active role in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict especially in the post cold war era. The European states unilaterally and collectively under the umbrella of EU, played major role in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. But my focus is on collective policy pursued by EU rather than the policies of individual European states towards Arab-Israel conflict.

The Arab-Israeli conflict was also caused by a European country- Britain who allowed Jews to immigrate Palestine from throughout the world, especially from Europe, when it was ruling over Palestine as mandate from 1921 to 1948. The Britain allowed Jewish community to immigrate to Palestine without consultation of the local Arab population. The influx of Jewish community to Palestine arouses tension among Arab

peoples. The Arab peoples opposed Jewish immigration to Palestine and started conflict with them. After the World War II, Britain left Palestine in terrible and violent situation after dividing it into two parts. A resolution was passed by UN General Assembly to divide the Palestinian land into two parts- Jewish state and Palestinian state. The resolution was accepted by Jewish state and she announced independence on May 14, 1948, formally known as state of Israel. The Arab states refused to accept UN resolution and attacked on newly state Israel. Since 1948, Israel fought several wars with Arab countries. Since then superpowers- the US and Soviet Union (present Russia) are heavily involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict. (Selim: 17)

Initially EU (then EEC, generally EC) did not take interest in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The EU's involvement in the conflict can be traced back in the 1970s when the oil exporting Arab countries imposed an oil embargo on some European states. The EU's policies towards the Arab-Israeli conflict can be identified in the three phases: the first phase that took place in the early 1970s, mainly driven by economic perspectives. The second phase took shape at the beginning of 1990s and lasted till the collapse of the Oslo peace process in 2001. In that phase, the EU uses its political and economic leverage in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The third phase started since the 9/11 terrorist attacks at Washington, when US asked the EU to join the Quartet on the Middle East. During that period, the EU, as an equal partner, was actively involved in the Arab-Israeli peace process. (ibid: 17)

The EU's involvement in the 1970s and Russia's perception:

Following the defeat in the Yom Kippur war of 1973, the oil exporting Arab countries imposed an oil embargo on some European states. At that time, the 80% oil needs of European countries was fulfilling from Arab countries. The oil embargo by Arab countries on some European states forced them to change the paradigm of their policy towards Arab-Israel conflict. The EC (later EU) initiate to develop common policy

towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Then the current nine members of the EC issued the Brussels Statement in November 1973 that called for a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on UN Security Council resolution 242. The statement called for Israel to leave the occupied territory that it had occupied since the Arab-Israeli war of 1967. The statement stressed that the legitimate rights of the Palestinians must be taken into account for the just and lasting peace. The Brussels statement helped to change the mood of Arab countries and they ready to export oil to all of the Europe, except Netherlands. In December 1973, the oil exporting Arab countries announced to increase 10% oil export to Europe by January 1974. (ibid: 18)

These developments marked the beginning “Euro-Arab Dialogue” between the EC and the League of Arab states. The EC and the Arab League had different opinion on the structure and the content of the Euro-Arab Dialogue (EAD). Whereas the EC stressed to limit the dialogue only on economic issues and barred the PLO to take part in the dialogue, but the Arab League contended that all issues including the Palestinian question should be covered under the dialogue. The disagreement over these issues was resolved by the creation of two regional negotiating teams- one European and the other Arab. Arabs appointed Ahmad Sidki, a PLO representative, as chairman of the Arab group. The dialogue convinced EC to take into consideration the Arab-Israeli conflict and develop a common policy towards it. But the EC continued on its stance to restricting the dialogue to economic issues. The EC’s policy was subsequently manifested in a number of declarations: on June 29, 1977, September 19, 1978, and June 18, 1979, and also in a speech of Irish foreign minister on behalf of EC at the 34th UN General Assembly. However, the Euro-Arab Dialogue achieved little as the EC emphasized on economic issues only and expressed its policy towards Arab-Israel conflict outside the content of the dialogue. The EU refused to play an active role in the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict that led to the suspension of the Euro-Arab Dialogue in 1980. (ibid: 18-19)

The suspension of the Euro-Arab Dialogue and the changing position of EC towards Arab-Israeli conflict resulted in the issuing of Venice Declaration on the Arab-

Israeli conflict on June 13, 1980 by the EC. The declaration clearly confirmed the EC's policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. It included the principles of recognition of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people including the right to self-determination, the inclusion of the PLO in the Arab-Israeli negotiations, the rejection of any unilateral initiative to change the status of Jerusalem, the need for Israel to put an end to the territorial occupation that it had maintained since the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 and the readiness of the nine member states to participate in a system of binding international guarantees (ibid: 19). With this formal declaration, the EC openly opposed the American-Israeli view, who labeled the PLO as terrorist organization. Therefore, with the declaration of the Venice documents, the EC increased its external autonomy from the US and thereby undertook its first decisive step towards evolving as an international actor. (Vanhoonacker 2010)

The main objective of Venice declaration was to establish just and lasting peace in the Middle Eastern region. The document constitutes a way for the Europeans to become major diplomatic actor in this region. However, the declaration received mixed response in the Middle East. Whereas the Arab countries welcomed the declaration and considered it as a step forward towards the right direction, the Israel rejected the declaration and amount it to as "another Munich". The PLO accepted the declaration with some reservations, as it did not recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. (Selim: 19)

The Venice declaration significantly adopted different approach from Camp David accords, which brokered by the US. The declaration was more affirmative on the issue of Palestinian self-determination and the status of the Jerusalem. Expectedly, the declaration was rejected by Israelis and its patron US and minimized the chance for EC to actively involve in the Arab-Israeli conflict. (ibid: 19-20)

The Soviet Union's approach towards EC's policy was some different from the US. The situation generated by oil crisis of 1973 provided an opportunity of economic gains to the Soviet Union. In 1973, the Soviet Union got double benefit when it imports

oil from Arab countries at low prices and sold it to Western European states at high prices. The Soviet Union not responded directly to the Venice declaration and also to the Fahd Plan. In an interview to the Israel's newspaper *Ha'aretz*, a Soviet diplomat in Washington told that Soviet Union affirmed a new initiative on the Mideast in which Moscow was comparing its approach to the EC's Venice declaration and Fahd Plan through meetings with European officials. The Soviet response had been consistently divided on the Fahd Plan. On the one hand, the Soviet press has tentatively agreed with the basics of the plan that expressed in the Schmidt-Brezhnev talks. On the other hand, the Soviet media expressed the same hard-line rejection of the plan as some Arab countries such as Libya, Syria opposed the plan. (International Intelligence 1981)

The Soviet Union silently opposed the Venice declaration because it sees declaration as would demise the Soviet influence in the Middle Eastern region. The Soviet Union was not ready to accept the EC's position in the Middle East on the cost of its own influence. The Soviet Union had conducted separate treaty with one major European country- Germany on various issues. The Soviet leader Brezhnev and chancellor of federal republic of Germany inked a trade agreement that provided a framework for cooperation between the two countries on various issues such as cooperation in industry, mining, science and technology, energy and nuclear power, and the establishment of high-technology industries in third countries in the developing sector. (EIR 1978)

The EU's involvement in 1990s and Russia's response:

The Gulf Crisis of 1990 aroused a new tension among Arab countries as well as Soviet leaders. Soviet leaders were not in a position to take absolute decision that ultimately led US to take initiative to expel Iraq from the Kuwait. The UN coalition forces led by US played major role to expel Iraq from the Kuwait. Subsequently end of the cold war and dissolution of the Soviet Union led to the decline of Soviet influence in the Middle East. These developments encouraged the revival of EC's position towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. The European powers convened an Arab-Israeli peace

conference in Madrid in October 1991 just two months before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Though the EC was only invited to the Madrid conference as an observer, which was held under the auspices of the Soviet Union and the US (Selim: 20).

Moreover, the Oslo peace accords, which were considered the basic principles for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, were secretly negotiated in Europe from January 1993 to September 1993, but signed at the White House (Washington) between PLO and the Israel in the mediation of the US. So despite the European nature of the Oslo peace accords, it could not have been accepted or signed by the PLO and Israel until the US gave them international clout. In both, the Madrid conference and the Oslo peace process had little involvement of individual European countries, but the EC had no participation in the Oslo peace accords and in the Madrid conference, it was only as silent observer (Soliman 2011: 7). Moreover, when bilateral talks between Israel and Arab countries started, the EC (then became EU, after the signing of Maastricht treaty) had been excluded from the peace process. The EU took part only in the multilateral talks that included five working groups. Again in 1994, the US and Israel called for the convening of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) conference in Morocco to discuss middle eastern economic cooperation, the EU was only invited as an observer (Selim: 20-21).

However, the creation of a CFSP in 1992, and the introduction of the post of EU special representative on the Middle East peace process in 1996 and the agreement to develop an ESDP in 1999, the EU have been endowed internally with a clearer legal competence to act. Moreover, it was given access to several new policy instruments and resources that have been fostered by the increasing political institutionalization. For example, the creation of the post of EU high representative in 1999, has significantly improved the capacity of the EU to speak with one voice and to operate on the international stage as a unified actor. (Vanhoonaeker 2010)

The second phase of European activity towards the Arab-Israel conflict was guided by its policy towards Mediterranean area at large because the EU began to see the Mediterranean area and the Middle East as a source of new threats to its security. These

included illegal immigration from southern Mediterranean countries and the rise of religious extremism in this region. The debate over EU's future direction between the Germans and the French led to the formation of EU's policies towards Mediterranean area including Arab-Israeli conflict. The Germans advocated that EU should pursue a policy to secure and integrate Eastern European countries, to ensure this region would not become a threat to Western Europe in the future. This policy also asked each European country to adopt bilateral approach in determining its policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. The French, on the other hand, advocated that the EU should pursue an active policy on its southern flanks and should develop common approach towards Mediterranean and the Middle East. After the debate, the EU's policy reflected as a compromise between two views: the EU would adopt a common policy toward the Middle East, the Mediterranean and the Arab-Israeli conflict, but it would primarily focus on economic issues and political role should be complementing to the US. (Selim: 21)

Certainly, the Arab-Israeli conflict is a key problem for all regional and international players. Russia which inherited the role of co-sponsor from the former Soviet Union in the Arab-Israeli peace process, has displayed tendency to cooperate with the European states in the West Asian region. In the 1990s, Russia not only tended to cooperate more actively with the European states, but also to recognize the EU role as an independent which is able to make an important contribution to the settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Russian official sources noted that though the EU lacking an official co-sponsor status, but vigorously trying to participate in the settlement of the entire range of regional problems. Russian analyst believe that the growing interest of the EU in the settlement of the West Asian disputes is due to existence of substantial economic interests in the region, especially in the Mediterranean region and by the regional security considerations conditioned by geographical proximity between Europe and the West Asia. (Naumkin: 6)

Russia has promoted to the EU for a greater role in the Arab-Israeli peace process, not because of desire for a rapprochement with the EU, but due to the certain

disappointment from the Russian-American co-sponsorship. The Russian-American co-sponsorship proved unable to ensure a successful continuation of the peace process. Another reason that propelled Russia to promote the inclusion of EU in the peace process was due to the EU's economic role in the peace process. The EU provided financial and economic assistance to the West Asian countries especially to the Palestinians. The EU was the largest donors to the PA in the 1990s. The fund allocated by the EU within the framework of economic assistance to the peace process, was more than 810 million euro annually. Furthermore, the EU annually allocates up to 610 million euro to the Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt on a bilateral and multilateral basis. (ibid: 6-7)

Apart from the economic assistance, the EU also played significant role in the multilateral negotiations which was introduced in the Madrid conference. The EU is the leading organizer of the multilateral working group on regional economic development, whose objective is the financial and economic support of the peace process and also to encourage regional economic cooperation. Simultaneously, the EU is also a co-organizer of working groups on refugees, water resources and environment. (ibid: 7)

The EU and Russia as equal partner in the Arab-Israeli peace process:

The 9/11 terror attack at Washington affected the whole world directly or indirectly. The Arab-Israeli peace process was also not untouched by this scenario. The US attacked on Afghanistan and later on Iraq. The world community with the US when it attacked on Afghanistan in 2001, but world community's decision was divided over US plan to attack on Iraq. To seek the support of world community mainly European countries, the US asked the UN and the EU, for the first time, to join a forum to monitor the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The forum of four major actors namely the US, the UN, the EU and the Russia formed in Madrid in 2002, sometimes known as Quartet. The Quartet is unique in several means: for the first time, four major actors came together to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The inclusion of UN in the peace process brought

international legitimacy and added weight to the peace process. The UN's involvement was particularly welcomed by the Arab countries. For the first time, the EU became equal partner with the US and others in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Since the formation of the Quartet in 2002, its representatives have met regularly focusing on a single issue and have issued a number of joint statements. The forum promotes two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (Shlaim 2005: 2)

The EU is an important player in the Arab-Israeli conflict for historical, political and economic reasons. It is Israel's largest trading partner and the biggest donor of economic assistance to the Palestinians. By contrast, the US is neither a major trading partner to Israel nor a major donor to the PA and it is the positive point for EU to gain some weight in the peace process. The EU cannot revive the western policy towards the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but it should limit the damaging effects of Anglo-American folly. The EU is the only international actor that has the capability to balance the sole surviving superpower in the West Asia. As a member of the Quartet and one of the authors of the "roadmap for peace", it has the right and duty to distance itself from the US foreign policy in this region. The US support for Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan amounts to an undeclared abandonment of the roadmap without the consultation of its allies, except Britain. (ibid: 3)

Iran

Iran is a non-Arab Islamic country in the West Asian region. Iran is the only country which shares Caspian Sea along with Russia and other former Soviet republics. And it is also the only country, except Turkey, who shares border with former Soviet republics. Iran is an emerging regional power and some time played a crucial role in the Arab-Israeli conflict. It has a confrontation with Israel and the some Arab countries as well.

Iran's policy towards Arab-Israel conflict and Russia's perception

The Iranian policy towards Arab-Israeli conflict was uncertain in the beginning of the dispute. Initially, Iran favored the minority plan that advocated a federated state of Palestine composed of two autonomous Jewish and Arab states. Iran along with other Arab states supported this plan as it would satisfy the Arab demand for a single independent state with an Arab majority. Thus, Iran with other Arab states like Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Yemen voted against the UN resolution that advocated the partition of the Palestinian lands between Jewish and Arab states. But at the same time, Iran accorded de facto recognition to the newborn state of Israel in early 1950. The Iran's ambivalent nature of policy at that time was probably due to ambiguous nature of Israeli relations with the then Soviet Union. (Ramazani 1978: 414-415)

During the creation of state of Israel, Iran was ruled by pro-US personality Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. Under Shah, Iran was aspired to gain prominent position in the Persian Gulf region with the support of the US. The Iran's de facto recognition to Israel in 1950 was seemingly due to the influence of the US (Rakel 2007: 160). However, once the state of Israel came into existence, Iran began to perceive its relationship with Israel within a larger political and strategic context. That context at the time was the emerging antagonism between the Soviet Union and the state of Israel. (Ramazani 1978: 414-415)

However, Iran had good relationship with Israel, but it opposed Israeli invasion of the Suez Canal in 1956, as the US. Iran's move was due to the fear of an even greater rise in Soviet influence in the region rather than because of its sympathies with the Egypt. Iran's friendly relations with Israel between the period of 1950 to 1967, the outbreak of Arab-Israeli war, was perceived because of Iran's primary objective of forestalling the increase of Soviet power and influence and the spread of communism in the West Asia. Thus, Iran sees no contradiction between its friendly ties simultaneously with Israel and some Arab states such as Jordan and Lebanon. (ibid: 417)

Ramazani (1978) argued that Israelis victory over Arab states in the 1967 war had been more welcomed by the Iran. He said that Iran must have privately rejoiced in the fact that the spectacular Israeli victory in the 1967 war in effect cut Nasser's down to

size, and the withdrawal of Egyptian forces from Yemen removed the perceived Egyptian threat to the Arabian Peninsula. However, the Iranian Shah personally denounced the Israeli occupation of Arab territories. (ibid: 417)

The Arab defeat in the Six Day War of 1967 led to the shifting of power and influence from the Arab heartland to Turkey and Iran and gained momentum with the Iranian revolution of 1979. One began to see, however, vaguely, the contours of the emerging Turko-Persian future of the West Asia in 1991 with the decimation of Iraqi power in the First Gulf War that provided both Iran and Turkey political space to increase their influence in the Persian Gulf and Iraqi Kurdistan respectively. It became a full-blown reality following the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq by the US and its allies in 2001 and 2003 respectively. (Ayoob 2011) In the beginning of the 1970s, Moscow's relations with Cairo began to deteriorate coincided with the improvement of Tehran-Cairo relationship while tensions between the Tehran and Tel Aviv surfaced, as might have been expected. In contrast to the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, Iran expressed its sympathies to the Arab states in the 1973 October war. Iran not only extended medical aids to the Arab states, but it also sent pilots and planes to Saudi Arabia to help with logistical problems and permitted the overflight of Soviet civilian planes carrying military equipment to the Arab states. (Ramazani 1978: 418)

The Islamic revolution in 1979 in Iran brought a dramatic change in the West Asian region. The US withdrew its support to the new Iranian regime consequently weakened the Iranian armed forces. At the same time, from 1979 to September 1980, the Iran's relations with Iraq also deteriorated. Through radio broadcasts, funding and guidance, Iran encouraged underground Shiite groups in Iraq to rise up against their Baathist regime. Similarly, Iraqi agents in Khuzistan tried to provoke Arab Iranians to demand autonomy from the new revolutionary Iranian regime. These situations led to the war between both countries. On September 17, 1980, Saddam Hussein reclaimed full Iraqi sovereignty over the Shatt al-Arab and five days later he exercised these self-proclaimed rights by invading Khuzistan by force (Farhang 1985: 661-662). The policymakers of all major powers whose interests are engaged in the Gulf region- the US,

European states, Japan and the Soviet Union felt a similar sense of frustration to deal with the conflict (Sterner 1984: 128). Since the outbreak of the war, 18 countries had sold weapons (directly or indirectly) to Iraq and 17 to Iran; 10 countries had supplied arms to both sides. (Farhang 1985: 667-668)

The small states of Persian Gulf region such as Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, UAE and Kuwait have been relieved to see their two political sources of worry- the Iraqi military and the Iranian revolutionaries- pitting themselves against each other (Farhang 1985: 668). However, the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989, and the rise of more pragmatic leadership in Tehran led to an easing of tensions between Iran and the Gulf Arab states. The two subsequent “Gulf wars” in 1991 and 2003 weakened Iraq, thereby strengthening Iran’s relative regional power. Iran’s relationship with the smaller states of the lower Persian Gulf has historically been centered on trade. The emirate of Dubai has emerged as Iran’s most vital Gulf trade partner and an occasional outlet to skirt sanctions (Molavi: Iran and the Gulf States).

Iran is a rising power in the West Asia which has time and again displayed its capacity and potentials as a regional player in the West Asia and its neighboring countries. The ongoing debate on the rise of Iran and its consequences has been dominated by two camps: a “hard power” camp emphasizing military capabilities and geopolitics and a “soft power” camp emphasizing religious and ideological factors. The hard power perspective suggests that Tehran has been the principal beneficiary of the American policy of regime change, as it removed two of Iran’s arch enemies and tied down American forces in both Afghanistan and Iraq, making it impossible for the US to put effective pressure on Iran to stop its support for terrorism and its alleged nuclear weapons program. These favorable geopolitical developments coincided with unusually high gas and oil prices (1999-2008), enabling Iran to build up its military strength, expand its regional influence through closer alignment with Syria and support for militant groups, most notably Hamas and Hezbollah, and at the same time ignore the economic

sanctions imposed by the US and the UN to stop its nuclear program. (Aghsan and Jakobsen: 560)

On the other hand with regard to the Russian Federation foreign policy in the post cold war era in the West Asia is playing a hardball, *realpolitik* in the West Asia. Russia is a principal military, economic, and geopolitical partner of Iran and views its West Asian policy through the prism of competition with the US. After a long break caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation began to pursue a more assertive course in the West Asia, at times significantly contradicting US policy in the region, particularly in arms sales and ties with radical regimes, such as Iran and Syria. (Cohen 2012)

On the other hand Iraq needed Russia's support to lift sanctions and hopes to use its assistance to eventually rebuild its military capability. Iran needs Russia to provide military equipment not available from Western sources. Amongst all Russia's West Asia clients, Russian-Iranian cooperation is the most advanced in the range of weapons systems sold to Iran by Russia and in the scale of technical cooperation. Between 1992 and 2000, Russia sold Iran 3 Kilo-class submarines, over 200 T-72 tanks, 10 Su-24 and 8 MiG-29 aircraft. Moreover, Iran has acquired licenses for the production of T-72C and BMP-2 armoured fighting vehicles. Russia has also provided Iran with a large number of military advisers who have trained its military- including submarine crews to operate these advanced weapons systems and helped to set up licensed production arrangements. A number of Iranian military officers are attending Russian military schools. (Antonenko 2001)

However, Russia is mindful of the security dimensions of the region especially with regard to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, ethnic crisis and internal upheavals in the region. Its bitter experience in the Chechen crisis and the impact of Taliban in Afghanistan in the 1990s is one of the reasons for Russia to be on vigilance of the security threats that can come from this region. The question of regional security and regional stability has become a source of concern for Russian Federation.

Another source of major concern for Russia is the proliferation of nuclear and Russia on the other hand does not want Iran to become a nuclear country. However, Russia certainly does not want to see Iran acquiring nuclear weapons. However, in contrast to the relatively recently formed Pakistan, Moscow sees the former Persia as a key fixture of the regional setup, and essentially a rational player, albeit a most difficult partner. Russia is interested in a solution to the Iranian nuclear problem that would keep Tehran's program certifiably peaceful, complete with monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As a quid pro quo, Russia believes, the international community needs to pay heed to Iran's legitimate security interests, and help establish an inclusive security system in the Gulf. (Trenin, 2010: 5)

Nonetheless, series of Russian contracts to build nuclear power plants and to share nuclear technology with Iran became a major international issue and a source of particular friction with the US. The initial 1993 contract was not fulfilled; a new contract, worth a reported US\$800 million, called for construction of a nuclear reactor on the Persian Gulf. In September 1995, Moscow announced a further contract to build two additional, smaller reactors. Although the US strongly protested what it viewed as potential nuclear proliferation to a terrorist state, Russia responded that international law permitted such deals and that the reactors would be under full safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency. (The Middle East)

In terms of its relations with its neighboring countries, Under the Shah, Iran with the help of the US casted a long military shadow over the Gulf. However, it did not have spheres of influence in the Arab world in the political sense. After the revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran quickly developed spheres of influence running mainly through Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. With the Syrian regime run by a non-Sunni Alawite minority, Iran developed a strong working alliance in which it increasingly emerged as the senior partner. In Lebanon, Iran adopted the cause of the Shi'i community there and established Hezbollah, which it proceeded to develop into a political, military, and social service organization to rival the Lebanese state. With regard to Iraq, Iran adopted the cause of the

Shi'i community there as well. Unable to operate in Iraq under Saddam, Iran hosted thousands of Iraqi Shi'i dissidents and built up the political and militia nuclei of the Iraqi Shi'i opposition in exile. These groups were able to project only limited influence in Iraq during Saddam's rule; after the fall of Saddam, they became a dominant force. (Salem, 2008; pg. 8-9)

During 1980 to 1990s the two states maintained balance of power in the West Asia. Under the leadership of Ayotullah Khomeini, Iran emerged as a new independent regional player in the West Asia with wide popularity and acceptance of its influence in the region. Iraq on the other hand under the leadership of Saddam Hussein challenged the potentiality of Iran by invading Iran in 1980s. Iranian power did not suit Saddam's Iraq, nor did it suit the Arab Sunni states of the Gulf, or the US, which had suddenly lost the alliance of the largest Gulf state and gained it as a mortal enemy. The Iraq-Iran war did not defeat Iran but did exhaust it. Even after the end of the Iraq-Iran war and the Iraqi defeat in Kuwait and the harsh sanctions of the 1990s, the Baath regime continued to constrain Iranian power until its own demise in 2003. With a hostile Iraq, Iran was politically and geo-strategically hemmed in; with a collapsed Iraq, Iran gained direct influence in Iraq, one of the most central and significant states of the Arab world, and gained indirect access to other states in the Arab West Asia. (Salem, 2008; pg. 9)

On the other hand, the role of the US in the region especially with regard to Iran has been of constant changes in its policies. Direct US military involvement in the West Asia began in the 1980s, with US navy escorting oil tankers through the Persian Gulf during the Gulf war. It escalated in full engagement in 1990-1991, with U.S. forces leading the war to push Saddam out of Kuwait. Its geostrategic agenda in the region also led to the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, the occupation of Iraq, threats to promote regime change in Iran and Syria, and pressure on nations to align along a "with us or against us" dichotomy. It also came with a strong democratization agenda arguing that terrorism was generated by repressive states and that more participatory political systems would help soak up the resentment and anger expressed in terrorist acts. The effects of U.S. policy

also created indirect consequences—the empowerment of Iran, the eruption of Sunni–Shi’i conflict in Iraq, the resurgence of Kurdish ambitions, the flourishing of al-Qaeda in Iraq—that created additional risks and opportunities for local states. (Salem, 2008; pg. 11)

With regard to the relationship of Russian Federation and its foreign policy towards Iran has been a complex one but yet with close economic ties in the energy sector, military and also technology. Since Iran does have economic “great power” potential: it is the second-largest oil producer among the members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the fourth-largest crude oil exporter in the world, and it boasts a population of some 71 million as well as an average GDP growth of around 5% over the past decade. (Aghsan and Jakobsen: 567)

Hence Russia being the leading energy producer sees Iran as a strategic partner and shares interests in maintaining the oil price at sufficiently high levels and thus regulates competition in the gas market by persuading Iran when it starts exporting gas to pump east to India instead of west to Europe. Another factor for the closer economic ties with Iran is Gazprom sees the Nabucco project—building a gas pipeline from the Caspian to Europe—as a direct competitor of its own South Stream plan, and wants to make sure Nabucco has no commitments from the Caspian gas producers. For their part, Russian companies have interests in oil and gas projects in countries such as Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Algeria, and others (Trenin, 2010: 6).

Nevertheless, continuation of Iran’s influence on the Middle Eastern issues such as Arab-Israeli peace, regional crises, freedom-seeking movements and management of regional interactions will depend on bolstering the country’s bargaining power and its ability to appear as an active player. It should also take advantage of its diplomatic skill and the power to convince others.

Turkey

Russia's approach towards Turkey's policy to the Arab-Israeli conflict:

The modern Turkey emerged from the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in the 1923. The Ottoman Empire was one of the largest and most powerful empires in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. The present Arab states were part of the Ottoman Empire before World War I. The defeat of Ottoman Empire in World War I resulted in the partition of the ottoman provinces by the great European powers. During the war, the European powers held an agreement in 1916, known as Sykes-Picot agreement where they agreed to partition Ottoman Empire. According to the treaty, France was to obtain Lebanon, northern Syria, northern Iraq and southwestern Turkey and Britain was to obtain western Arabian territories of Persian Gulf, Transjordan and the rest of Iraq and Russia acquired Istanbul and some large cities of eastern Turkey. And Palestine was given to Britain as mandate. During the mandate, Britain allowed Jews to immigrate to Palestine that paved the way for the creation of state of Israel and ultimately beginning of Arab-Israel conflict. (Ucuzsatar 2002)

The Turkish policy towards the Arab-Israel conflict can be characterized as uncertainties, confused and contradictory since the creation of state of Israel followed by the beginning of Arab-Israeli conflict. In November 1947, Turkey opposed the UN resolution that advocated for the partition of the Palestine into two parts- Jewish state and Palestine state. Hence, it stands with the Arab countries who also opposed the resolution. Turkey voted against the US and the Soviet Union but with the then handful of Arab members of the UN and thus shared the defeat in the UN. Initially, Turkey refused to recognize the Jewish state. However, the Turkey's alignment with the West from 1949 to 1964 was to have decisive effect upon its regional policy. In March 1949, Turkey was persuaded to recognize the newly state of Israel. In switching its line, Turkey was able to invoke the changed circumstances arising out of defeat of Arab countries by Israel in the

first Arab-Israel war of 1948. The success of Israelis military made Ankara more confident. (Robins 1991: 74-75)

In the next Arab-Israeli war of 1956, Turkey's policy was guided by its relationship with the US. Turkey criticized the joint action of British-French-Israel against Egypt, as the US. Turkey denounced the Israel as 'the greatest threat to peace and order in the middle east' and withdrew its ambassador from Tel Aviv in response to the Israeli invasion of the Sinai Peninsula in 1956. However, Turkey's action was no more than a gesture, which did not calm the Arabs. Nevertheless, Turkey's foreign policy began to change in the early 1960s and it adopted more independent, flexible, dynamic and diversified approach towards Arab-Israel conflict in the coming year. In the six day war of 1967, Turkey refused to join the group of 'maritime powers' demanding the reopening of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping. Following the war, Turkey voted for UN resolution 242 that prescribed the withdrawal of Israeli forces from territory occupied during the war and asserted the right of all states to live together peacefully within the recognized boundaries. Turkey also supported Arab resolutions at the UN General Assembly labeled Zionism a form of racism in November 1975. And in January 1975, Turkey recognized PLO as the representative of the Palestinians as well. Moreover, in October 1979, Turkey permitted the PLO to open an office in its capital, Ankara. (ibid 1991: 76-79)

However, during the cold war period, Turkey was not much active player in the West Asia and it tried to avoid its involvement in inter-Arab disputes, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and other regional conflicts such as the Iran-Iraq War. Turkey tried to maintain close and friendly relations with all states of this region including Arabs, Iran, and Israel. The only exception to this trend was Syria with whom Turkey's relations were marked by ill feeling arising from Turkish sovereignty over Hatay (Alexandretta) province, ceded by France in 1939. Turkey was the first Muslim country who recognized Israel in 1949. Turkey gradually adopted more pro-Palestinian position in the Arab-Israeli conflict after 1967. This shifting of policy was partly due to domestic political pressures and growing

influence of Islam in electoral politics, and partly due to Turkey's willingness to establish better political relations with the Arab world. Simultaneously, Turkey's relations with the West, particularly the US strained over the Cyprus issue. In the wake of oil crisis in 1973-74, the Turkish governments sought to meet the rising oil prices with the Arab states and Iran as well. (Sayari 1997: 44-45)

In the post cold war era, Turkey began to pursue a more active role in the West Asian region including the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia as well. Turgut Ozal, the Turkish prime minister from 1983 to 1989 and then President until his death in 1993, played a central role in the formulation of this strategy. Ozal believed Turkey could continue to be a valued ally of the West only by expanding its regional role and influence. The Gulf War of 1990-91 paved the way to increase Turkey's power and influence in the region. Turkey's support to the coalition forces marked a radical departure from its earlier policy of non-involvement in regional conflicts. (ibid: 45)

Throughout the cold war period, Moscow's relation with the Turkey was regulated in the context of cold war politics. Turkey perceived Soviet Union as a threat to peace in the West Asian region and it shared the same security concerns regarding the Soviet Union as like its western allies. As a NATO member Turkey was a bulwark against Soviet influence in this region. (Kasim 2003-2004: 203)

The Truman Doctrine brought Turkey to close to the West, particularly to the US. The main aim of the Truman Doctrine was to prevent the expansion of Soviet Union in this region. Turkey, later joined NATO in 1952 and therefore increased the tension among Soviet leaders. However, the Cyprus issue indicates the little improvement in relations between both countries. Soviet Union supported the Turkey's first intervention in the Cyprus in July 1974 but opposed the second intervention took place in August 1974, arguing that the problem should be solved in international arena. The Cyprus issue indicates the deterioration of relationship between Turkey and the US. The arms embargo by the US on Turkey played a vital role to the improvement of relationship between Moscow and Ankara in the beginning of 1976. However, the Soviet intervention in

Afghanistan abandoned the development of good relations between both countries. (Gurtuna 2006: 29-33)

In the context of Arab-Israel conflict, turkey was not much involved. Before 1991, Turkey kept itself away from the regional disputes including Arab-Israel conflict. Thus, it did not confronted with the Soviet Union on this issue.

Turkey's approach towards Israeli-Palestinian peace process

In the post cold war period, Turkey has been the strong supporter of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The signing of Oslo peace accords in 1993 between Israel and Palestinian was welcomed by the Turkey. Turkey sees the peace process as an important step towards regional stability. However, Turkey's support to the peace process was mainly guided by its economic interests who saw it as an opportunity to increase regional economic cooperation. . (Larrabee 2007: 109)

The Turks expect that Israeli-Palestinian agreement will ease its way to increase trade and economic relations with both- Israel and Arab states. Moreover, since 1992, Turkey has been participated in the multilateral working groups related to the peace process, especially those dealing with economic development, water, and arms control. At the same time, Turkey has lent its support to the new Palestinian government. Turkey was one of the first countries and the only member of NATO who extend diplomatic recognition to the Palestinians in November 1988. Since December 1991, when Turkey upgraded its relations with both- the PLO and Israel to ambassadorial level, it sought to establish closer economic and political ties with the Palestinians and has offered to help with housing and other infrastructure projects. Ankara and the Palestinian Authority (PA) have hosted high-ranking visiting Palestinian and Turkish delegations, respectively. And the PA Chairman Yasser Arafat strongly opposed the Arab criticism of Turkey over the signing of the Israeli-Turkish agreement. Although Turkish officials have positive expectations regarding regional stability and economic cooperation from the peace

process, they also are concerned about its impact on Syria's military and strategic posture vis-a-vis Turkey. Turkish leadership believed that when and if an agreement is reached between Israel and Syria, Damascus will be in a better position militarily to press its charges against Turkey over the water issue, and possibly even on the question of Turkish sovereignty over Hatay (or Alexandretta) province (Sayari 1997: 50). However, Turkey's relations with Syria considerably improved in the fall of 1990s. The strained relationship between two in the 1980s and early 1990s, they reached a crisis point in October 1998, when Turkey threatened to invade Syria if Damascus did not cease supporting the PKK. In the face of Turkey's strong military power, Damascus backed down and expelled PKK leader Ocalan from Syria. After some time, Damascus expressed its willingness to improve relations with Turkey. This rapprochement was underscored by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's visit to Ankara in January 2005- the first trip by a Syrian President to Turkey since Syria's independence in 1946. (Larrabee 2007: 109)

The dissolution of the Soviet Union marked a significant turning point in the relationship between Moscow and Ankara. The both countries came close to each other and increase trade to a high point. Until the 1998, the trade between both countries reached to \$10-12 billion a year, making Turkey Russia's main trading partner in the West Asia. Turkey is a major purchaser of natural gas from Russia, thus gives Gazprom a real incentive to promote Russian-Turkish relations. Turkey also purchased military equipment from Russia including helicopters that had been embargoed by the US. At the same time, there are some differences between both countries. Turkey is increasing its influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia, which was part of the former Soviet Union and Russia considered it as own sphere of influence. Secondly, Turkey is promoting to build an alternative oil export pipeline namely BTC that bypass Russia. Russia accused Turkey for its support to Chechen rebellions; on the other hand, Turkey is also suspicious about Russian support to the PKK terrorist and about the continued Russian military presence in Armenia and Georgia, near Turkey's northeastern border. (Freedman 2001: 80-81)

Moscow welcomed the Turkey's support to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and its participation to the multilateral peace talks.

The 9/11 terror attack at Washington brought Russia and Turkey to close to each other, because both countries also had bitter experience of terrorism. The leaders of both countries conveyed their condolences to US President George W. Bush and expressed their support to the US on the "war on terror". The similarities in Russian and Turkish view of terrorism not only as a domestic threat, but as a global one brought them to much closer to each other and for the first time in the post cold war period they united against the same enemy (Gurtuna 2006: 73-74).

In 2003, Turkey and Russia also shared same stage when they criticized the US invasion of Iraq (Taspinar and Hill 2006: 81). The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 forced Turkey to involve more deeply in the regional politics. The Turkey strongly criticized the US move. Though Turkish leadership had no sympathy with Saddam Hussein, but they saw him as a leader who provided stability on Turkey's southern border. Turkey worried that his overthrow might fragment Iraq while strengthening Kurdish nationalism, thereby jeopardizing Turkey's security. (Larrabee 2007: 105-106)

Because of the nature of problem, major countries of the world, are directly or indirectly affected by the Arab-Israeli conflict. For instance in 1973, the world community mainly European states and Japan faced the oil crisis in 1973 due to War. After the oil crisis of 1973, the European states came on the front to resolve the Arab-Israeli dispute. In the 1990s, European states individually arranged a series of peace talks between Israel and Palestinian.

Apart from the US, the UN, Russia and the EU, two regional players- Iran and Turkey also, sometimes, played a major role in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Chapter V

Conclusion

Conclusion:

Since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, followed by the beginning of Arab-Israel conflict, the superpowers- the US and Soviet Union (present day Russia) have been heavily involved in the Arab-Israel conflict and West Asia region as a whole. The West Asia region was the focal point of the conflict between the Soviet Union and the US. In the first Arab-Israeli war that took place in 1948, Soviet Union supported the newly Jewish state- Israel and provided arms and military equipments against western oriented Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon who attacked the state of Israel from all sides and refused to accept the UN partition plan.

Joseph Stalin, the then General secretary of the CPSU, supported Israel with the hope that the newly Jewish state would help to demise the influence of the US in the West Asia region. The Soviet policy towards Arab-Israel conflict was not driven by ideological perspectives. Joseph Stalin adopted pro-Zionist approach, without changing his anti-Zionist stance, to please the newly Jewish state and brought it into Soviet favour. The Soviet Union provided military assistance to Israel against western-oriented Arab countries in the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948. But after a short period, it became evident that Israel was tended towards West and in the next four major Arab-Israeli wars, Soviet Union sided with Arab countries. The Soviet Union's relations with the Israel started to decline in the early 1950s. Some time before the death of Stalin, the Soviet-Israeli relations deteriorated and continued till the end of the cold war. During the 1956 Arab-Israeli war, Soviet Union criticized the joint military attack of Israel-Britain-France on the Egypt and it also provided arms and weapons to Egypt through Czechoslovakia. The next Arab-Israeli war took place in 1967 in which Arab countries were badly defeated by the Israel. Following the Israel's ignorance of Soviet demand for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of forces from the Golan Heights, Soviet Union broke her diplomatic relationship with Israel and rest of the cold war period, there were no diplomatic relationship between Tel Aviv and Moscow.

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the CPSU. After coming to power, he gave indication to changed policy towards Arab-Israel conflict and West Asia as a whole. Gorbachev initiated political dialogue with Israel in 1988 and established full diplomatic relationship in October 1991, just two months before the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Simultaneously, Gorbachev's policy towards Arab countries such as Syria also changed and he refused to provide weapons for ensuring military parity with the Israel.

Soviet Union and the US played major role to brought Israel and Arab countries on the negotiating table. After the intensive efforts of James Baker, then US secretary of state, a peace conference took place between Israel and Arab countries in Madrid in October 1991. The conference was unique in nature as it took place after long negotiations between two parties, not after the war as like previous negotiations. This was the last conference in which both- USSR and the US were present. After the two months of the summit, Soviet Union collapsed.

The Russian federation become the successor state of the Soviet Union and took Soviet Union's seat in all international organization including UN Security Council. The 'new Russia' dislodges itself from the Soviet political and economic system. And Russia adopted democracy in political sphere and followed the market economy path. In the initial years, especially during his first term in office, Russian President Yeltsin and his foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev followed pro-western policy and walk on the shadow of the West, particularly the US. The Russia's pro-western policy reflected in its approach towards Arab-Israel conflict and the world as well. Russian President Yeltsin continued to improve its relationship with Israel and pushed Palestinians concerns into the side of his foreign policy. However, Russia's improving relationship with the US and Israel increased its involvement in the West Asian peace process and provided Moscow a opportunity to sponsor the peace talks with the US. After the intensive efforts of the world community, a peace agreement officially known as 'Oslo peace accord' was signed between Israel and Palestinians in Washington on 13 September 1993. The agreement

took place after long secret negotiations between Israel and Palestinian in Oslo. The secret negotiations took place in Oslo, Norway, but the signing ceremony held in Washington. It indicates that without the US approval, there was no value for any peace negotiations. On behalf of Russia, foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev signed on the agreement as a witness of the treaty. The Oslo peace accord made a major breakthrough in the history of Israeli-Palestinian conflict. By the signing of the Oslo peace accords, both sides recognized each other. Palestinian recognized Israel's right to existence and Israel changed its earlier attitude and accepts as the negotiating partner. A series of peace talks, from Oslo I to Camp David agreement of 2000, took place, but neither produces any result.

Throughout the Yeltsin presidency, mainly until January 1996, Russia followed pro-western policy. During that period, President Yeltsin and his foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev adopted a pro-western policy and walk on the path of the US. They were highly impressed by the US political and economic system and they sought US help to reform the Russian political and economic system. The pro-western policy of the Russian leaders reflected in Russia's approach towards Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Russia allowed the US to play key role in the peace process and kept itself away from the Palestinians concerns. This pro-western policy was highly criticized by the opposition leader of the Russian State Duma. The highly criticism from the domestic politics forced Yeltsin to replace pro-westerner Andrei Kozyrev with the hard-liner Yevgeny Primakov. The appointment of the Yevgeny Primakov as foreign minister reflected in the revival of Russia's active policy towards the West Asia region. He paid a series of visits to the West Asian countries. Primakov pursued a pro-Arab policy and rejected the American-Israeli opinion of 'no war, no peace' situation can exist indefinitely.

Following the resignation of President Yeltsin on December 31, 1999, Vladimir Putin became acting President and elected as President in March 2000 and re-elected for second term in 2004. After coming to power, Vladimir Putin asserted to regain great power status for the country. In the initial years of his presidency, Putin pursued

defensive nature of policy rather than assertive nature. Russia under Putin showed the revival of its role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

In 2002, Russia along with UN, the US, the EU and Russia formed with the aim to resolve Israeli-Palestinian dispute. In this forum, known as Quartet, Russia has equal status with the US and the others. In 2003, the forum issued a 'roadmap for peace'. It is basically a guideline to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Russia with the EU, opposed Israeli settlement and the construction of security wall in the occupied territories. Russia asserted that Palestinians basic rights must be taking into account before discuss any negotiations. However, Russia's move was opposed by the US that abandoned the Russia to play a big role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

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