Chapter 1

THE NATURE, SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

1.1: A Summary Overview

Imagine that, an American has been lying for almost 50 years on a procrustean bed. A big gun under his pillow is fully loaded and ready to shoot any Soviet intruder who might burst in through a window of his room.

Today, as he is getting up from that bed, he discovers a Soviet in the room - smiling with an olive branch. He also notices that, there are many other people all-around him, that his gun is of little use in the crowd, and that the setting in the room is being re-arranged. Astonished, he congratulates himself on having apparently detered any hostile break-in by the Soviet. Yet, with painful bedsores, he is puzzled to make sense of the changes and the bustle. Gradually, he begins boasting his 'victory' and sets-out to chart a selective policing role for himself in the anarchical community outside his home.

This metaphorical sketch, in essence, picturizes the vicissitudes of contemporary international systemic transition and American response and role in the era beginning with the end of the Cold War.

What follows in the succeeding pages, is an attempt to understand the causal dynamics of this systemic transition and its inter-influ-
ence with the relational patterns between India and the United States. This inquiry is to be aided by theoretical frameworks of comparative natures, specially developed for the purpose of this study.

1.2 : Boundaries of Inquiry

In the wake of the end of the Cold War and disintegration of its bipolar structure, a protracted debate has been seriously intensified about the emergent international systemic transition.

For forty years students and practitioners of international relations thought and acted in terms of a highly simplified but very useful picture of world affairs, the Cold War paradigm. Under the guiding constructs of this paradigm the world was divided between one group of relatively prosperous and largely democratic societies, led by the United States, engaged in a highly pervasive and multi-facet rivalry with another group of relatively poor, communist societies, led by the Soviet Union. Much of this rivalry resulted into conflicts, most of which occurred in the Third World composed of countries which often were poor, politically unstable, were recently independent and a large number of which claimed to be nonaligned under the leadership of India.

The Cold War paradigm could not account for everything that went in world politics. There were many anomalies (Huntington 1993), to use kuhn's term, and at times the paradigm blinded scholars and statesmen to major developments of global significance. Yet, as a simple model of global politics, it accounted far more than any of its rivals, as it became an indispensable starting point for thinking about
international relations. So overarching was its influence that it came to be almost universally accepted and shaped thinking about world politics for nearly two generations.

All this appeared to be changing rapidly, and at times astonishingly so, after 1989. Since then, a number of dramatic events culminating into the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its 'empire', made the Cold War paradigm intellectual history. Today, there is clearly a need for a new model that would help us to order and to understand the resultant central developments of international systemic transition, understood most basically in its structural sense, and the causal dynamics that has actually brought it.

The present study attempts to reach that understanding by analysis through theoretical framework. We believe that a theoretical framework is the most essential tool, not only for understanding the causal dynamics of contemporary events but to predict and to pre-empt the future course of events to a certain degree.

The probable consequences of the current systemic transition are not merely abstract academic puzzles, of interest only to theoreticians. The prospects of international order under different distribution of national capabilities will affect the ways policymakers visualize the "menu of choices" (Russet and Starr 1989) opened by the advent of a system of a depolarized global power. Crucially related to this depolarization of international power configuration is the prospect of Indian and American capability to act in and influence bilateral and international relations in a changing global scenario through the twenty-first century. A systematized inquiry - systematized by a theoretical framework - into the emergent prospects of Indo-U.S. relations in reference to the international systemic transition is timely.
one, inasmuch as most observes (for example, Eagleburger 1989, House 1989) now predict that a truly multipolar system is on the horizon. This system is fraught with great challenges that threaten to end the longest period of great-power peace since the modern interstate system was created by the treaty of Westphalia in 1648. What John Gaddis (1991) calls the "long peace" is a propitious but a largely unanticipated outcome whose preservation may be contingent on an adequate understanding of the relationship between system structure and stability (Kegley, Jr., & Raymond 1992). This study attempts a systematized inquiry, with the help of a conceptual framework, into the emergent prospects of Indo-U.S. relation in the context of the present systemic transition.

1.3 : Significance of Theorization

The study of international relations, like some other social sciences does not yet resemble the hard sciences (Mearsheimer 1990). Our stock of theories is spotty and often poorly tested. The condition required for the operation of established theories are often poorly understood. Moreover, as political phenomena are highly complex, hence precise political predictions are impossible without very powerful theoretical tools. Nevertheless, We believe that social sciences should offer predictions on the occurrence of momentous and fluid events like those unfolding at present times.

Princes have always sought the wisdom of soothsayers for the purpose of learning what the future holds for them and their kingdom. The foretelling, on the whole, have been disappointing. Surprise remains as one of the few things which assiduous efforts of soothsayers have failed to ward off.

Surprise is still very with us. The abrupt end of the cold war and the
sudden disintegration of the Soviet Union, astonished almost everyone, whether in government, the academy, the media, the think tanks, or the citizenry in general. Although there was nothing inherently implausible about these events, the cold war did have to end sometime, and communism’s failures had been obvious for years, the fact that these phenomenal events arose unexpectedly and rapidly suggests that deficiencies persist in the means by which modern day princes and their soothsayers seek to discern the course of world affairs (Gaddis 1992/93).

No modern soothsayer, of course, would aspire to total clairvoyance. Truly, we do not have an equivalent of Isaac Asimov’s (1951) famous character, the mathematician Hari Seldon, whose predictive powers were so great that he was able to leave precise holographic instruction for his followers, to be consulted at successive intervals decades after his death. But historians political scientists, economists, psychologists, strategists and even mathematicians can claim the power to detect patterns in the behavior of nations and the individuals who lead them; an awareness of these, they have assured us will better equip statesmen and states to deal with the dynamics of world politics. The following pages contain a cogitative and systematic attempt to realize that claim.

The end of the cold war and the beginning of the international systemic transition which is still progressing - presents an opportunity and indispensibility to realize those claims. This event is of such importance that no approach to the study of international relations claiming both foresight and competence should have failed to see it coming. None Aactually did so. And this fact ought to raise questions about the tools and methods we have developed for trying to understand world political dynamics.
This study advances two theoretical frameworks to understand and possibly predict international systemic transition and determinants of foreign policy and bilateral relations of India and the United States. We advance these frameworks with humility and admit that wise soothsayers in future will undoubtedly improve on our work with wisdom of hindsight and the courage of foresight.

References


