Chapter 2

Systemic Changes and New Challenges
George H. W. Bush became the President of the United States of America in 1989, amidst momentous developments. The Gorbachev phenomena were on the rise with its novel policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, which were bringing about tremendous changes in the socio-economic and political lives of the Soviet people. The Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty signed in 1987 between the former Soviet Union and the US had envisaged the elimination of an entire category of nuclear weapons. The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan too was underway in accordance with the Afghan Accord, signed in the same year. The heyday of Communism seemed to be collapsing with Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Bulgaria witnessing rapid loss of the Communist monopoly.\(^1\) But on the other hand, the same year also witnessed political turmoil in China, which eventually led to the crushing of democratic demonstrations by students in the Tiananmen Square.\(^2\)

**Managing Strategic Stability**

As Cold War tension receded, President Bush considered it wise to begin his presidency with concrete arms control measures. Though some of the founding fathers of modern arms control, such as Thomas Schelling, had begun to express skepticism about too much reliance on formal agreements,\(^3\) President Bush was not so pessimistic. He held his first summit with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev

---

at Malta in early 1989.\textsuperscript{4} The summit elevated the US-USSR relationship beyond \textit{détente} towards a cooperative relationship. The summit certainly dwelt upon arms control issues but the two leaders also discussed issues, such as political transformation of the Soviet Union and prevailing political upheavals in Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{5}

The Malta Summit was followed by the Washington Summit in 1990. This meeting between Bush and Gorbachev gave further momentum to arms control measures initiated by the two nations, even as the significant achievement of this summit was signing of an agreement related to elimination of chemical weapons. In addition, the two leaders signed a set of principles to govern the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START)\textsuperscript{6} that was to be eventually signed on 30 July 1991.\textsuperscript{7}

In the backdrop of growing cooperative relationship between Washington and Moscow, the American policy makers appeared increasingly less concerned about the so-called Soviet threat---which dominated American thinking for decades since the end of World War II. Accordingly, the American people too enjoyed a sigh of relief with the reduction of Soviet threat to the US. It was reflected in the opinion polls in the US (which showed) that the Americans were more worried about the state of the US economy and rising drugs abuse than about the Soviet Union and the threat of nuclear weapons.


\textsuperscript{5}Ibid, p.331.

\textsuperscript{6}The START concept began with the first presidency of the Reagan Administration. It continued into his second Presidency, which witnessed intensive US-Soviet negotiations symbolized by a joint draft with a lot of brackets signifying issues of disagreement. The Bush Administration added some more areas of concern to the draft he inherited; In Rakesh Gupta, “US Policy Towards START”, \textit{Strategic Analysis}, vol.14, no.5, August 1991, p.514.

\textsuperscript{7}Moscow was granted the ‘Most Favoured Nation’ status by President Bush at the 1991 Moscow summit after the signing of START.
Gulf War

The emerging bonhomie between the US and the USSR came for a test when the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein sent his troops to Kuwait and militarily occupied the whole country in August 1990. The US and its allies became extremely concerned over this development, since Iraq controlled about ten percent of the proven global oil reserves and it would soon control another ten percent, if it succeeded in annexing Kuwait.8

In addition to the effect on energy supply, Saddam Hussein’s action also sparked off regional tension in the Middle East. It was a great challenge to the physical security of several other ‘small sates’ of the region. In a speech before the Joint Session of the US Congress, President Bush said that the Soviet threat was no longer there, but the world still remained a ‘dangerous’ place and warned that ‘the consequences of regional instability’, could be ‘global’.9

President Bush’s submissions clearly indicated that the US would not remain a silent observer and would meet the Iraqi challenge in right earnest.10 The Iraqi invasion was considered a strategic and economic challenge for the US as well as the world. President Bush appeared determined to free Kuwait’s oil reserves from Saddam Hussein’s clutches (being a ‘hydrocarbon society’ and consuming 17 million oil barrels daily,11 the US could not allow Iraq to dictate the

---

9 Ibid, p.1
oil prices in the global market). Moreover, President Bush made it clear that ‘my military objective is to see Saudi Arabia defended...’  

India's Dilemma

India was in a tight spot in the wake of the Gulf crisis, not only economically but also diplomatically. It initially took a relatively flexible stand on Iraq’s aggression by disapproving it and simultaneously calling for a need for all ‘foreign’ forces to withdraw; thereby implying that it was also against the presence of American and other forces in the region. No self-respecting nation could endorse what the Iraqi strongman did. Endorsement of such an action could threaten the independence and territorial integrity of the small states around the globe. At the same time, India found it difficult to oppose a country, which had been a trading partner as well as a fellow non-aligned country. In addition, a large number of Indians had contractual jobs in Iraq and the occupied Kuwait.

India was reluctant to go the whole hog against Iraq’s occupation of Kuwait due to a number of reasons. These were, as follows:

- **Safety of Indian nationals stranded in Kuwait.**
- **Ensuring supplies of oil.** This was more a question of price rather than its availability since there was other oil producing countries that were willing to raise production quotas.
- **Its close relations with Iraq**, which despite being an Islamic country was relatively secular and nonaligned.

---

12 Ibid.  
Iraq's supporter to India on the Kashmir issue.

Building of a large Western armada on India's doorstep was an unwelcome development.

In any case, India was adversely affected by the embargo imposed by the UN against Iraq. India's initial dillydallying led to some misunderstanding in the US Congressional circles on Capitol Hill. It also led Saddam Hussein to state that he would let all Indians go home, but only after receiving traditional Indian supplies in return. Differences also arose over the manner in which the Indians should be evacuated—whether by Iraqi planes or Indian ones. India's dilemma was reflected in the fact that both Iraq and the United States appeared suspicious of India's motivation. While Washington expected India to take a tougher stand on the issue, Iraq perhaps desired that a traditional friend like India would not take a hostile stand.

While Indo-Iraq relations did not remain positive, despite India's flexible stand, a 'new pragmatism' in Indo-US ties was also becoming evident during this time. To prevent any misunderstanding of India's position on the Kuwaiti issue, the Foreign Secretary, Muchkund Dubey stated:

"India has repeatedly made it clear that it is against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. It also emphasizes India's stand for the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and the restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty and independence. It highlights India's adherence to

---

15 A letter consisting of India's hardships was submitted under Article 50 of the UN Charter, which states that if any nation faces economic problems as a result of preventive or enforcement measures taken against any state by Security Council, the affected nation could consult the Security Council for solving those problems. One of the major economic problems faced by the Indian government was that thousands of Indians lost their jobs in both Iraq and Kuwait. In "UN urged to Solve India's Problems", Patriot, 7 September 1990.

16 Adhikari, no.13.

17 Ibid.
UN trade sanctions... despite enormous costs to the (Indian) economy."  

Prime Minister Chandrasekhar, refrained from condemning America's advances on Iraq, although he did not have any positive remark to make on American military build-up in the Persian Gulf region. India also joined the 154-nation UN resolution that permitted use of force against Iraq when the latter refused to withdraw from Kuwait after expiry of the UN deadline.

*Indo-US Differences over Gulf Crisis*

A certain dividing line began to emerge between the interest of the major powers and those of the developing nations during the occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi troops. For the great powers the issue was war or peace. However, for the developing nations, there were two other pressing concerns:  

- The safety and security of their nationals working in the Gulf countries.
- The immediate, medium and long-term impact of the crisis on their respective economies.

Unlike the nationals of the developed Western countries, millions of skilled and unskilled labourers from the developing world had got permits to work in the Gulf countries. There was justifiable concern in the developing countries, including India, that a war in the Gulf would endanger the safety of these overseas workers and would also affect the foreign exchange remittances from the Gulf countries. Moreover, India and the other developing countries knew that the rising

---

18 Ibid.
19 *National Herald* (New Delhi), 14 September 1990.
oil prices could cripple the economic activities in a more devastating way than it could happen in industrial nations.

Keeping in mind the safety and well being of its nationals in Kuwait, India agreed to send food and medicine supplies to the war ravaged country. This was not taken kindly by the United States. The US objected, although discreetly, to India’s initial proposal to send food and medicines to Kuwait for its stranded citizens. The US stand was that there was no way India could ensure that the supplies were reaching the right people and not Iraqi military camps. Further, the US suggested that India should obtain a clearance from the UN Sanctions Committee before taking such a step.20

The next issue over which the two countries differed was the deployment of multinational forces in Saudi Arabia to defend the desert kingdom against a possible invasion by Iraq. It would be a disaster for the world if the Iraqi President would repeat in Saudi Arabia what he did in Kuwait. The US policymakers had kept it in the uppermost part of their minds that defending Saudi Arabia from a possible Iraqi invasion was as important as the goal of liberating Kuwait from Iraqi occupation.

But there was no meeting of minds among nations on this issue. All the members of the international community didn’t fully share the American point of view. India for sure had a different opinion. Teresita Schaffer, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs before the House Subcommittee on Asia made the following statement:

“New Delhi has drawn a distinction between sanctions, which it strongly upholds and the deployment of forces to Saudi Arabia, which it does

20 Adhikari, no.13.
The Indian government wanted the UN to handle the crisis on its own. In fact, India favoured the conclusion of the Helsinki Summit between the American and the Soviet leaders, who met at Helsinki in September 1990 and agreed not to rush to war. The leaders of both sides decided that peaceful means should be resorted to resolve the crisis. They also agreed that food shipped to Kuwait and Iraq on 'humanitarian' ground would not be subjected to the naval blockade.

India agreed with the Helsinki Summit's conclusion that strict and wholesale enforcement of sanctions alone, may over a certain period of time, convince Saddam that he must submit to the will of the world. New Delhi admitted that the decisions emanating from the Summit were probably the best that could be expected at that time. However, India and other nations pointed out that food windows should be opened up on the naval blockade.

The summit statement gave Saddam an opportunity to withdraw troops from Kuwait with honour. It conceded that once the withdrawal was complete and the status quo restored, all other issues of dispute in the Gulf and the Middle East would be taken care of, including Iraq's claims against Kuwait and the Arab-Israeli conflict and they would be urgently pressed for settlement, through peaceful means. While India stuck to this way of resolving the conflict, the US changed its mind, mostly due to Saddam Hussain's obstinacy.

The third point of difference between India and the US related to the warm exchanges that took place between Indian Foreign Minister I K Gujral and Iraqi

---

21 Indian Express (New Delhi), 21 September 1990.
22 Ibid.
President Saddam Hussein in Baghdad in 1990. Twenty Member of Parliaments (MPs) from Kerala cutting across the political divide petitioned Gujral to ensure the safety and security of the stranded Malayalis in the Gulf. India, decided to do the balancing act, but in the process made a fool of itself. The Gujral-Saddam ‘bear hug’ (as it came to be known) was flashed all over the media in the world and caused major embarrassment to the Indian government and was not perceived as an ordinary development in the US policy making circles. This gesture was totally uncalled for since the repatriation was already underway.23

While on one hand the interaction symbolized a ‘week-kneed, humiliating and counter-productive’ response by the Indian government,24 on the other, Stephen Solarz, the Chairman of the House Asia Subcommittee informed the Indian Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey that India’s posture would have a serious bearing on all future decisions taken by Washington regarding Pakistan, which had taken precipitate action in strengthening the military initiative against Iraq by sending its troops for assisting the multinational force lining up in Saudi Arabia.25

Domestic Political Differences

There was a domestic debate over whether India should join the coalition force in support of the US against Iraq in the Gulf War. Some suggested that India should adjust to pax Americana.26 Since it had neither the military nor the economic muscle for a major role in the Gulf, it should try to reach an

23 Interview conducted with a former senior functionary of Government of India on 8.5.02.
25 Ibid.
26 Telegraph (Calcutta), 8 January 1991.
understanding with the US. Such an understanding, it was believed, would be welcomed in Washington in view of the prevailing threat to energy security to Iraq and the future threat to the same from the rising trend of Islamic extremism.27

There were two schools of thought that acted as catalysts for the debate: the ‘realists’ and the ‘traditionalists’. The ‘realists’ felt that Gulf War was an opportunity for India to wean the US away from Pakistan. The Pressler Amendment already invoked against Pakistan clearly implied that the USA was attaching less strategic value to its former ally, Pakistan. The ‘traditionalists’ on the other hand believed that non-involvement in the Gulf conflict would serve India’s interests better. Weaning away Pakistan from the US could rebound on India since the US had neither permanent allies nor enemies. Further, India’s nonalignment would receive a severe blow from such a policy.28

As the tensions in the Gulf rose to alarming proportions, it became the core issue in the contemporary foreign policy agenda of the US. The ramifications of prolonged hostilities in the Gulf were bound to have serious consequences upon the post-Cold War global strategic equilibrium. American scholar, Stephen Cohen in a Conference of Indian and American scholars held in California during the Gulf crisis identified the fundamental US objectives in the Gulf as:29

- Containment of Islamic fundamentalism
- Control of arms flow
- Prevention of weapons of mass destruction falling into irresponsible hands.

---

27 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
The summit however, failed to ensure a peaceful resolution of the Gulf crisis. With the passage of time military action, aiming to drive out Iraqi troops from Kuwait, became a certainty from a possibility. When Iraq failed to comply with the UN deadline for withdrawal of troops from Kuwait, the US began the war against Iraq in mid-January 1991. On 29 January 1991, President Bush pledged that the allied coalition’s effort in the Persian Gulf region ‘will succeed’, declaring that the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein’s aggression ‘will not stand’. In his State of the Union Address, Bush stated that Saddam’s ‘unprovoked invasion’ of Kuwait ‘violated everything the community of nations holds dear. The world has said this aggression would not stand---and it will not stand’.30

**Refueling Issue**

In the midst of Indo-US political differences over the Gulf crisis, Washington and New Delhi quietly made an agreement to allow refueling of some US aircraft on their way from the Pacific to the battleground in the Persian Gulf region. It was indeed a development that surprised many not only in India but also in the neighbourhood and the world at large. How could India join hands with the US in the latter’s military action against Iraq? Would it not be against its principle of non-alignment? Should India not insist on diplomatic and political solution of the problem?

The refueling of US military planes at various Indian airports indeed fuelled a major domestic political controversy. It also adversely affected Indo-Iraqi ties. A.W. Shekly, the Iraqi Ambassador, described the fuelling support to

---

30 ‘President Bush’s State of the Union Address’, *Strategic Digest*, vol.21, no.4, April 1991, p.754.
the US as 'unacceptable'. However, India’s stand was regarded by some as a step in keeping with ‘friendly’ bilateral ties between India and the US. India allowed the transit of US Air Force transport aircraft through Bombay and these facilities were granted for the purposes of carrying non-lethal supplies, including medical supplies and for evacuation of personnel on medical, humanitarian and emergency grounds’.\(^31\) It was further mentioned that I. K. Gujral had entered into the actual refueling agreement in September 1990.\(^32\)

According to a senior bureaucrat, occupying a key functional position in the government of India at that point of time, and a keen observer of Indo-US relations from close quarters, such an agreement did not exist. However, both the governments reached an understanding, which was kept confidential, for a variety of reasons by the Chandrasekhar government. Some kind of cohesion had to be worked out between the two since it was a belief of the major powers of the time that they were fighting our battle in the Gulf. After all, Kuwait could de-stabilise the Gulf and countries such as India, US, UK, Germany and Japan were all-dependent on the Gulf.\(^33\)

Domestic tempers were also upbeat with such an issue. Each party was trying to blame the other for the permission granted to US war planes to land in India on their way to the Gulf. V P Singh denied the Congress (I) charge that the decision to grant permission had been taken when he was the Prime Minister. The Janata Dal and the Left parties in turn were trying to blame the Congress (I) and the Chandrasekhar government.\(^34\)

\(^{31}\) No.19.


\(^{33}\) Interview conducted with a former senior functionary of Government of India on 8.5.02.

\(^{34}\) Financial Express (New Delhi), 3 February 1992.
Despite reservations expressed by Iraq and the domestic political uproar in India, one fact seemed to be clear and that was refueling was allowed by India in the light of emerging closer Indo-US ties. The emerging friendly relations between the two countries were reflected on the crucial Kashmir issue. As India was increasingly concerned about the rising trend of militancy in the Kashmir Valley, the Bush Administration gave hints that it would no longer emphasise on 'plebiscite' as a means to resolve the Kashmir issue. And, at the same time, it would highlight the importance of the Simla Agreement between India and Pakistan as a solid basis for a resolution of the entangled Kashmir issue.\footnote{Patriot (New Delhi), 8 February 1991.}

However, some analysts also argued that most Indians did not seem to realize that this new US policy formulation also meant that there was no need for Pakistani troops to be withdrawn from Occupied Kashmir. This in turn, indicated a division of Kashmir—a division brought about by the use of force by Pakistan. Washington, thus, hoped to prevent India from undoing the aggression.\footnote{Ibid.}

The Gulf War, however, could not be taken advantage of by the Indian government for asserting itself. Throughout the crisis, India was unable to play a constructive role. The Iraqis and pro-Saddam Arabs accused India of being an American stooge while the US was not happy with India's dilly-dallying of the crisis, apart from other differences that cropped up between the two countries. On the other hand, Kuwaitis and anti-Iraq forces labeled India as pro-Saddam for the famous Saddam-Gujral 'bear-hug' and for initially failing to condemn Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.\footnote{Strategic Digest, no.30, p.857.} Unwilling to fight against Iraq, for its own compulsions,
alongside the US and its coalition allies but unable to broker peace, India, found itself isolated in the international power game. 38

New Initiatives, Old Mindset

A new spirit of co-operation was presumed to have developed in Indo-US relations during the Gulf War. But it was a tactical development. It in no way represented a long-term change in the direction of this bilateral relationship. However, the Gulf War took place in the midst of unprecedented political transformations in East European countries, the former Soviet Union and China. The Gulf War represented a period of great power cooperation. Months after the Gulf War, the Soviet Union collapsed into fifteen different independent republics. It was a big blow to the international system. The post-World War II systemic collapse, however, did not lead to any new stable international system.

As nations around the world groped for a new foreign policy to meet the emerging challenges, so did India and the United States. Though in 1979, Dr Henry Kissinger had alluded in his book *The White House Years* to what he called 'the never never land of US-Indian relations', but the new era envisaged 'a growing partnership between the world's two largest democracies.'39 Would the spirit of the Gulf War time cooperation persist? There was no doubt that the US adopted a more cooperative approach towards India.

Washington’s willingness to probe the possibility of a new equation with India became clear when it withdrew its earlier objections to the sale of a Cray

38 Ibid.
supercomputer to India. The early 90s were tough times for the Indian economy, compelling it to seek financial bailout from the IMF. The American hand, in taking the difficult negotiations between the Fund and India to a satisfactory conclusion was evident; when India was sanctioned US $1.8 billion credit assistance.

The biggest impact of the Gulf War was possibly upon the global oil economy with oil prices shooting to dizzy heights. Being heavily dependent on oil-imports, India's foreign exchange reserves were under severe stress. It sought recourse to the Contingency Financing Facility (CFF) of the IMF and was again helped by Washington. India was the first developing country to get wholesome support of US $1 billion from the IMF facility, which was more than the US $ 400 billion it had initially asked for.

There were more in store. A standby credit of US $777 million was negotiated within a remarkably short span of only six weeks. In November 1991, the IMF parted with another $2.2 billion as standby arrangement. A month later, the World Bank stepped forward to help India by sanctioning a credit and loan package worth US $ 900 million.

As mentioned earlier, American strategic considerations with respect to the Soviet Union and Pakistan, were overriding factors in determining the Indo-US relationship. But the end of the Cold War terminated old priorities and gave birth to new ones. One of the easily discernible changes was the US approach to Indo-Pakistani relations. In 1989, in a confidential letter to the then Pakistan Prime

---

41Ibid.
42Ibid.
Minister Nawaz Sharif, President Bush had warned that he might have to declare Pakistan a terrorist state if the cross-border terrorism attack on India, paid for and orchestrated by the ISI continued.\textsuperscript{43}

The Bush administration, further, urged upon Pakistan to settle Kashmir on the basis of the Simla (1972) agreement and desist from patronizing secessionist tendencies in Punjab and Kashmir.\textsuperscript{44} In the hearings of the subcommittee on Asia and Pacific affairs of the House Committee on Foreign Relations in March 1991, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Teresita Scheffler, stated that the UN Resolution on plebiscite in Kashmir, strongly supported by the US in the past, was in favour of bilateral negotiation within the framework of the Simla Agreement. The US commitment towards bilateral negotiations prevented Pakistan from raising the issue of Kashmir in the Security Council.\textsuperscript{45} The advocations were in complete contrast to the White House's earlier stands on Kashmir, which were largely determined by Pakistan's value as a strategic ally in South Asia.

With President Bush pronouncing a New World Order, which went through practically unopposed, policy options for India were quite limited and forging security links with the US became almost imperative for the incumbent Indian government. Apart from the changing global political equation, India's decision to develop security and military links with the US was also partly necessitated by the increasing support offered by Pakistan to militancy in Punjab and Kashmir and for rebuffing Pakistan's diplomatic offensive on Kashmir.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
The US approached the issue of strategic and military co-operation in line with the proposals of Lt. General Kickleighter, formerly of the US Army.\textsuperscript{47} The salient features of the co-operation included visits by Chiefs of Staff, creation of a Joint Army Executive Steering Council, exchange of staff information and collective training information, combined training activities and co-hosting of a Pacific Armies Management Seminar. The naval co-operation had links with the US Pacific Command covering the Indian Ocean littoral and the Asia Pacific region.\textsuperscript{48}

The post-Cold War days, thus, witnessed a gradual, positive grooming of the Indo-US relationship. The change, however, was hardly sudden. Both the countries had developed keenness to improve mutual ties since the early 1980s, right after the erstwhile Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s successful comeback to power, and her fruitful visit to the US on 30 July 1982. The latter was a significant milestone in cultivation of good relations and was described as ‘an adventure in search of understanding and friendship.’\textsuperscript{49} The two countries began attempts for evolving a matured relationship.\textsuperscript{50}

The brighter spots in the Indo-US relationship in the early years encouraged Senator Orrin G Hatch to predict in 1983 that he believed ‘a historic shift is underway…’ in ‘the relations between United States and India…’.\textsuperscript{51} What

\textsuperscript{47} The Kickleighter proposal was made during the Bush Administration in 1991 for enhanced level of defence cooperation between the two countries.
\textsuperscript{50} See Indo-US cooperation – Agriculture (New Delhi), USIS, 1982.
was initiated by Mrs. Gandhi was carried a step forward by her son, and the next premier of India, Rajiv Gandhi. His successful visit to the US laid strong foundations for cultivating new tides in the Indo-US relationship in the broad perspective of South Asian security. Military cooperation in various forms like joint naval exercises, seminars, workshops, trainings and selective transfer of dual-use technology, were accompanied by recognition of India as a force to reckon with in the region.52

Contemporary developments in South Asia convinced the US about India’s ability to skillfully negotiate odd disturbances in the region. The initiatives taken by India in accordance with its agreement with Sri Lanka, and its subsequent withdrawal from the island country of Maldives by paying heed to the requests of Sri Lanka and Maldives were well appreciated by the US. Allowing India a more level playing field in South Asia was a significant departure from the Cold war stratagem. The need for a review of roles however, even during the Afghanistan crisis, can be made out from the following extract by F. Frankel in his article “Play the Indian Card” in 1986:

“Above all, Washington needs an Indian polity that will facilitate New Delhi’s difficult role of building a regional consensus on security issues in South Asia – including a response to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan.... A US policy recognizing India’s position as the natural arbiter on political conflicts in the area can create more room for problem solving through negotiation, India’s preferred style, and provides the best hope for stability in a potentially explosive environment. A new India policy comparable to the bold Chiria opening of the 1970s would highlight the common interests that

52 India’s role in Sri Lanka (1987), Maldives (Nov. 1988) and during the Gulf War (1990-91) has been mentioned as examples of the US recognition of India as a major power. For details on recent development in military cooperation In Dilip Mukherjee, “US weaponry for India”, Asian Survey (Berkeley), 27, No. 6, June 1987 In P. Kamath, “The US Role in South Asia since the end of the Cold War: From Partisan To Balancer”, Strategic Analysis, vol.16, nos.8-12, 1993-94, p.1214.
are almost entirely obscured by the bilateral Pakistan-India US framework. At stake are America’s interests in the emergence of a strong stable, democratic and non-aligned India, an interest that America until now, was able to relegate to the distant long term. That long term is upon us.”

With new developments unfolding in the international scenario, there had been a marked tendency on part of the United States to acquire an increasingly low profile in its strategic system. As Richard N Haass, the Special Assistant to the US President and Senior Director for Near East and South Asian Affairs, had acknowledged that the US eagerness in viewing South Asia in terms of the East-West framework, and the overriding desire for containing communism in the region, were no longer important strategic parameters for the US. This underlined a marked shift in the US foreign policy in the sense that Indo-Pak issues in South Asia were no longer looked at as derivatives, mechanically collected and weaved into America’s global strategic fabric in a dialectical way for perceiving South Asian issues separately and in a regionally distinctive way, not as a subset of its overall global policy.

“It is important to note that we will do everything possible to resist making our relation with India and Pakistan an either/or zero sum proposition.... in the modern age it is neither prudent nor possible to have a successful relationship with only one of these two states. We will require good relations with both or we will likely end up with good relations with neither”.

53 F Frankel, “Play the Indian Card”, Foreign Policy, no.62, Spring 1986, p.66.
55 Ibid.
US-Pakistan Strategic Detente

Once the Soviet troops withdrew from Afghanistan, US approach towards Pakistan drastically changed to worse. Gripped by the fear of losing Afghanistan, the Ronald Reagan administration had justified arms sales to Pakistan, on the grounds of restraining its nuclear ambitions. With Pakistan continuing to remain a beneficiary of the US largesse, Indian fears, regarding the sophisticated weapons provoking wars similar to 1965 and 1971, were quite genuine. Any talks with the US regarding future co-operation between the two nations had to figure this legitimate apprehension.

India watched with concern when the Reagan Administration used to certify Pakistan's nuclear virginity under the Pressler Amendment. An editorial in the *Hindustan Times* perhaps reflected the reaction of India:

“[O] ur policy makers...should spell out appropriate countermeasures to meet the Pakistani threat...Rajiv Gandhi may be right when he says that India does not want to have nuclear weapons, but what other options does he have to prevent Pakistan from using nuclear blackmail in the foreseeable future.”

However, the end of the Cold War induced the US to review the utility of Pakistan as an ally. With the Soviet threat no longer a consideration; Afghanistan became a low-priority territory, as did Pakistan and its strategic importance. It was at this juncture that Washington decided to use the instrument of aid in a different way. The US Congress suspended disbursement of annual economic and military aid worth US $580 million to Pakistan in October 1990. This was the inevitable

---

fallout of President Bush’s inability to certify, under the stipulations of the Pressler Amendment that Pakistan did not possess a nuclear device.\textsuperscript{57}

The outcome underlined a marked departure from the earlier Reagan regime’s strategy of justifying aid to Pakistan on the grounds of nuclear restraint. But if the new strategy decided to get harsh with Pakistan, it did not contain sops for India. It was not supposed to. But there is little doubt that a major irritant in Indo-US relations was out of the way with the growing strategic distance between Washington and Islamabad.

\textbf{Military Cooperation}

Less than a year after the suspension of US military and economic assistance to Pakistan, a proposal to enhance US-India military cooperation was on the table. Lt. General Kickleighter, the commander of the US armed forces assigned to the Pacific, came out with a concrete set of proposals for US-Indian military and security cooperation. The objective of the Kickleighter proposals was “to pursue a common policy of gradually strengthening ties towards expanded cooperation and partnership by the end of the decade”.\textsuperscript{58}

The proposal, among other things included:\textsuperscript{59}

\begin{itemize}
  \item Visits by Chiefs of Staff on annual basis to alternating countries.
  \item Setting up of Indian/ US Army Executive Steering Council.
  \item Holding regular strategic symposiums.
  \item Regular staff talks between the two armies.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{57} The Times of India, 17 January 1991.
\textsuperscript{58} Dawn, 9 August 1999.
Reciprocal visits by other senior commanders.

Staff information exchanges.

Reciprocal training and individual training programme.

Unit training exchanges and observation of training exercises.

Combined training activities.

US and Indian army participation in the Pacific Command Joint Committee level meeting programme.

Attendance and participation in regional conferences.


Collective training information exchange and cooperation.

Personnel exchange programme.

According to a retired senior functionary of the Government of India, the Kickleighter proposal looked excellent on paper but when it came for implementation, the Pentagon dragged its feet all along, until the recent 9/11 crisis faced by the United States.  

It is important to note that most of the proposals were related to Army-to-Army cooperation in general and the cooperation between the Indian Army and the US Pacific Command in particular. The proposal was kept secret until the visit by Chief of Staff of the Indian Army, General S.F. Rodrigues, to the US Pacific Command, Hawaii and Washington between 18-31 August 1991. The Indian General’s discussion with the US officials “was a wide range, broad-brush meeting of the minds, a discussion of convergences between US and Indian

60 Interview conducted with a former senior functionary of Government of India on 8.5.02.
policy”, and the two sides kept the door open for further cooperation in future.  

Admiral Chuck Larson, Commander of the US Pacific Fleet paid a return visit to India in December 1991 and gave additional momentum to the dialogues on US-Indian military cooperation.  

The Kickleighter proposal coincided with the political and economic turmoil in the Soviet Union, the US pressure on Pakistan on nuclear proliferation issue and emerging tension between Washington and China over the human rights and trade issues. It was expected in the policy making circles in the United States that India would more favorably respond to the Kickleighter proposals on defence cooperation in view of Washington's tough stance against India's traditional foes, China and Pakistan; and growing uncertainties in the Soviet Union, India 's partner since 1971.  

Many analysts saw the proposal as a trial balloon of America’s strategy of ‘cooperative vigilance’ in the Asia-Pacific region. However, US repeatedly emphasized that the new relationship would be in the nature of partnership.  

There was no question of India forming a formal military alliance with the US.  

The implementation of the Kickleighter proposal was not delayed. The first Indo-US Army Executive meet took place in January 1992, which worked out modalities for exchange of officer's on courses and observers for exercises and specialized training. The US delegation was headed by Lt. General Johnnie Corns (who succeeded Lt. General Kickleighter at the US Pacific Command) and Lt. General V. K. Sood represented the Indian side. The delegation showed

---

61 Mahapatra, no.59.
62 no.58.
63 Ibid.
64 Times of India, 16 October 1991.
interest in high altitude warfare in Siachen and expressed keenness to observe the training, firing and maintenance of weapon systems, specialized food and medicines and operational logistics there.66

In addition to discussing logistics of military cooperation, the US delegation was reported to have made two significant observations. First, it voiced the American concern over the growing threat of Islamic fundamentalism in the Indian sub-continent. Second, it also expressed confidence in India’s ability to act as the only regional stabilizing force in arguably, one of the most volatile territories of the world, comprising of the Islamic crescent from Turkey to Malaysia.

The deliberations at the Steering Committee meeting in New Delhi were succeeded by conduction of joint Indo-US naval exercises in March 1992. The occasion was remarkable in its significance and invited sharp attention of the strategic community. The scale and intensity of the exercise underlined a degree of cooperation, which India had never attempted to foster with the Soviets. In the words of Stephen Cohen, it was “a miracle which symbolizes a new openness and accessibility between the two countries”.67 The unfolding and unprecedented military cooperation underlined sharp convergence of interests between India and the US in the emerging context of a post-Cold War era.68

New World Order

Charles Krauthammer had written:

“The immediate post-Cold War world is not multipolar. It is unipolar. The center of world power

66 Ibid.
67 no.58.
68 Ibid.
is the unchallenged superpower, the United States, attended by its Western allies... American preeminence is based on the fact that it is the only country with the military, diplomatic, political and economic assets to be a decisive player in any conflict in whatever part of the world it chooses to involve itself...".69

The above statement was enough to suggest that a section of the Americans were already of the opinion that the United States had emerged as the sole superpower after the demise of its adversary, Soviet Union. However, there was uncertainty all over and it was not yet clear how India would fit into the Bush Administration’s strategic and political schemes in the Asian continent. Was there a place for India in President George Bush’s concept of a ‘New World Order’?

Amidst the Persian Gulf crisis, President George Bush on 1 October 1990 in his speech before the UN outlined his concept of a ‘New World Order’. He visualised “a new partnership of nations...based on consultation, cooperation and collective action”.70 ‘Pundits’ and politicians in the US as well as around the world soon began to read the Bush’s new concept of a ‘New World Order’ differently. Debates and discussions ensued over the concept and some analysts read a presidential desire to maintain the pax Americana, which had resulted from the Soviet collapse.71

Many felt that the essence of this 'New World Order' underlined the USA's desire to preserve and strengthen its role in international affairs. This, it was believed, could be achieved through absolute military superiority over other states. US Defence Secretary Dick Cheney told the members of the Air Force Association: "There are certain fundamental truths which retain their significance and which in the future will determine the course of events in years to come. Among these truths is the fact that peace and stability in the world will, as before, depend on US strength and determination, on our readiness to provide an active presence throughout the world, wherever our interests or the interests of our allies are threatened. Peace and security will depend on the presence and potential of US Armed Forces".\(^{72}\)

Such a statement expressed the Republican philosophy of arch conservatism, their own idea of foreign policy whereby the US would play a dominant role in the matrix of world politics and the other countries would be either allies or vassals. This was a continuation of Reagan's foreign policy of 'regional influential' (initiated in the 80s whereby the US was to play the global policeman). In this connection, attention could be drawn to Richard Haass's analogy of the US behaving like a 'sheriff' and wherever the 'sheriff' would discover danger, he would distribute badges to the others to take stock of the situation. Once the problem ceased to exist, the Sheriff would dismantle the posse. This theory of Haass could be applied to India and Pakistan on various occasions by the US.\(^{73}\)

\(^{73}\) Interview conducted with a former senior functionary of Government of India on 8.5.02.
It was not clear what the ‘New World Order’ really meant in practice and where India would fit in. Some worried that this concept was a cloak for perpetuation of *pax Americana*. The President’s new policy, some felt, was aimed at unleashing a world different from the Cold War period. A new partnership was envisaged by his speech, as interpreted by analysts and ‘pundits’, between India and the US.

With abolition of controls and the progressive mood towards a more open and market-oriented economic regime, the US envisaged greater business opportunities in India and this marked a new turning point in the economic relationship between the two countries. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, open borders marked a new era where there were no impediments to open ideas including ideologies of democracy. This idea was further reinforced by the collapse of the Soviet communism paving the way for greater democracy and greater capitalism.

To further clarify the emerging confusion over the ‘New World Order’ concept, US Secretary of State Warren Christopher sought to define the US role and objectives in the post Cold War world order as: 74

- The US should continue to engage and lead.
- It should maintain and strengthen productive relationships with the world’s most powerful nations.
- It is essential that it adapts and builds institutions that will promote economic and security co-operation.

---

- It should continue to support democracy and human rights because it serves US interest and ideals. Thus the shift was evident from the Cold War foreign policy of containment to a new policy of engagement.

With the ‘New World Order’ and a growing partnership between the two, it was also foreseen by many that the 1990s would see India emerging as a major regional power of Asia. The expansion of India’s ‘zone of responsibility’ as a whole was, however, believed not to be inconsistent with the interests of the US and the other world community.

Despite New Delhi’s growing proximity with Washington, the widespread belief still prevailing during the Bush presidency was the realization that the world was increasingly unipolar, and that India would have to learn to coexist with dignity with the US. Nevertheless, India’s growing potential was also making it clear to Washington that India was a future power to reckon with.

This chapter reviews a typical time period when the US was coming to terms with a new world system after the end of the Cold War and minus its main adversary the Soviet Union. For the first time, both ‘adversaries’ became unlikely partners and joined hands to deal with the Gulf crisis. The Helsinki Summit marked the end of the Cold War era when both the countries came together on a common agenda.

During the period, India’s emergence as a ‘potential, major’ power began to be recognized by the sole superpower, the US. Joint military exercises were undertaken by both the nations, especially joint naval exercises, to mark

---

symbolically, the coming together of the two ‘estranged’ powers of the Cold War
days.

However, in spite of the positive beginning made, the road ahead was still
fuzzy and unclear. India retained considerable ambiguity over the pronunciation
of the ‘New World Order’ by President Bush. The President’s vision was
responsible for giving rise to considerable uncertainty in so far as India’s
visualization of its own role in the new order was concerned. There was also a
certain amount of skepticism prevalent among policymakers in India.
Notwithstanding the reservations, there were clear indications that India had
resolved to adjust to the new, unfolding realities with resolution, composure and
maturity.