INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

The United States foreign policy is generally characterised by overarching global engagements. These engagements are the result of the shifts and changes in the international configuration of power in the aftermath of the Second World War and its wide-ranging politico-strategic results. In the post-war global scenario, the United States foreign policy has been predicated on essentially four fundamental national interests: preventing/containing the expansion of Soviet power and influence in the Third World; sustaining the commitment to the independence and security of friendly countries; developing and strengthening political and economic linkages internationally to ensure US security and spread of capitalism; and maintaining freedom of access to critical raw materials and sea passages. Emanating from these broad American national interests have been specific goals and objectives that have historically conditioned and are currently guiding US foreign policy. In the post-cold war scenario, however, Washington perceives that the Soviet factor has been substituted by much more diffused centres of threats originating from terrorism, fundamentalism or 'rogue states.'

Evidently, the American state has been undergoing transformation ever since the Second World War. For more than five decades, the US maintained its position and power as the leading capitalist power of the world capable of influencing the politics and political economy of various regions and countries. However, the US continued to define and redefine its goals and
strategies in consonance with the complex and changing international environment.

The Third World has always remained an area of special concern to the United States, particularly in the background of the vulnerabilities of these states to the erstwhile Soviet-led socialist world. The political vacuums that emerged after independence presented in large part a sudden opportunity for the US to gain new spheres of economic and political influence by maintaining status quo in the erstwhile colonies. It also became a political and economic duty of the US as the dominant capitalist state to ensure continued western economic and political access in areas that were formerly colonial preserves. US interests intersected with the Third World interests on three main levels: in the quest for regime stability, in US-Soviet global power competition and in the internationalization of Third World conflicts. Many real and potential Third World conflicts had a strong undercurrent of ideological differences among elites, which invited superpower entanglements. In many Third World conflicts, the United States found itself increasingly allied with the conservative or moderate states against the erstwhile Soviet Union and the progressive and/or radical states.

Thus, a major objective of the United States has been to prevent/contain the spread of communist.radical movements in these states. To offset the potential of such communist.radical forces, influenced by either the Soviet Union or China, the United States used to devise various methods and strategies, and foresaw in the geographical location of various border states of the Soviet Union and China evident strategic advantages in meeting these perceived threats. The other major concerns of the United States have been
preservation of economic and commercial interests, maintenance of regional stability and halting the spread of nuclear proliferation, particularly in the Third World.

Keeping the American global concerns and regional strategies in perspective, this study tries to examine the United States policy towards Afghanistan, a country of extreme vulnerabilities because of its strategic location in the Southwest Asian region. The period (1979-91) envisaged for the study is significant in many respects. First, the decade of 1980s was marked by profound changes in global politics. The US–Soviet relations saw many ups and downs, dictated heavily by internal political developments in Afghanistan and, subsequently, in the USSR. The United States policy towards Afghanistan shifted from a proclaimed passivity to interventionist concerns during this period. In the post-Geneva Accords (1988) phase, the United States again moved from interventionist concerns to a near passivity, particularly in the background of the disintegration of USSR in 1991. The period, however, offers adequate opportunity to find out the major undercurrents in the United States strategic objectives in the region, particularly in Afghanistan.

For long, the United States had only peripheral interest in Afghanistan, even though the country was strategically located near the socialist states of the erstwhile Soviet Union and China. However, with the advent of the cold war, Kabul tried to arouse concern in Washington over the vulnerability of the country and its consequences for the region. In seeking economic and military assistance, Afghanistan repeatedly took the United States into confidence about the ‘aggressive’ Soviet intentions, and said that such aid
was crucial to enhance Kabul's security against internal and external threats, including the one from the Soviet Union. Despite its concern over the increased Soviet pressure on Afghanistan, the United States did not come up with the counterbalance. In fact, certain American perceptions about Afghanistan held back the United States from evolving any critical policy option vis-à-vis Kabul.

However, the internal political situation in Afghanistan became more vulnerable to the radical politics at home in the 1970s and to the pressures from across the borders. During 1978-79, Afghanistan was to undergo tremendous changes under the Marxist revolutionary regimes. In late December 1979, the situation in Afghanistan had worsened so much with the intervention of the Soviet Union and the overthrowing of the four-month old regime of Hafizullah Amin. In his place, Babrak Karmal, a former deputy prime minister, was appointed to head a more pro-Soviet government. The change of government was preceded by a massive Soviet military build-up on its border with Afghanistan and an airlift of several thousand Soviet combat troops and military equipment into the capital of Kabul. Subsequently, with the Soviet support, Karmal's government was overthrown and Najibullah became President.

The United States responded to these developments by reinstating the cold war strategies and tactics. The mujahideen, the counterrevolutionary forces in Afghanistan, were assisted by the United States through Pakistan. Its assistance to Pakistan increased enormously because of Pakistan's strategic location, which also provided asylum to millions of Afghan refugees. The US
interest in the region had already grown out of the setbacks in Iran with the fall of the Shah regime, the trusted policeman of Washington.

Against the background of the developments in Iran as well as in Afghanistan, President Jimmy Carter enunciated a doctrine in January 1980 by stating that “the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan could pose the most serious threat to the peace since the Second World War.” He added that the region which was threatened by the Soviet troops in Afghanistan was of strategic importance to the United States. The key element of the Carter Doctrine was that an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region (for that matter the entire region of Southwest Asia) would be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States and such an assault would be “repelled by any means necessary including military force.” In line with this strategic thinking, the United States provided Pakistan with enormous economic and military aid even overlooking the American laws prohibiting aid to nations that attempted to acquire nuclear weapons. Carter, thus, changed his earlier position because it was mainly through Pakistan that the US helped the counterrevolutionaries in Afghanistan.

Carter's successor Ronald Reagan also enunciated a similar doctrine which further clarified the American position on this question. The Reagan administration was firmly committed to the support of insurrections against Marxist regimes at the periphery such as Nicaragua, Angola and Afghanistan. However, during 1985-89, the situation in Afghanistan was poised for change because of the initiatives of the Gorbachev leadership in Moscow and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan consequent upon the Geneva Accords of 1988.
But the post-Soviet withdrawal phase of the Afghan crisis again showed signs of internal disruption marked by infighting and quarrels between different factions of the mujahideen forces. This resulted in a terrible chaotic situation in the county making it impossible for sustaining a stable political system. In the emerging scenario, the United States appeared to have lost its vital concerns in Afghanistan, particularly since the Soviet Union was losing its power and leverage during 1990-91. However, against the backdrop of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Washington decided to withdraw, albeit temporarily, from the messy political equations in Afghanistan. Though the US commitments to the mujahideen were apparently transient and tactical, they seemed to have multiple effects on the politics of Southwest and Central Asia in the 1990s.

The study seeks to examine the United States policy towards Afghanistan during 1979-91 in the background of the Soviet intervention and the latter’s support to the revolutionary regime in Kabul. It tries to analyse various policy options considered by the United States in the general context of its foreign policy objectives and strategies in the Third World. The study addresses itself to the following questions pertaining to the United States policy options and responses to the situation in Afghanistan.

(a) Did the United States policy towards Afghanistan reflect the basic parameters of its Third World policy?

(b) What were the strategic considerations in the United States increasing involvement in the Afghan crisis? Did it envisage any shift in the traditional policy of the United States?
(c) Did the internal political situation in Afghanistan during 1978–91 call for American involvement?

(d) How far had the Carter and Reagan doctrines been relevant to rationalize American intervention on behalf of the fighting Mujahideens?

(e) What were the implications of the United States involvement in the crisis for the regional political equations?

(f) To what extent had the Geneva Accords been an instrument of settlement in Afghanistan?

(g) Has the post-cold war situation contributed to the lessening of tensions in Afghanistan? And what role did the United States seek to play in the post-Soviet withdrawal phase?

The questions set forth above are examined by analysing: (a) the United States policy towards the Third World in the post-war period; (b) the United States policy responses to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in three phases, 1978-80, 81-87 and 1988-91; (c) the nature and extend of the United States support to fighting mujahideen and the ‘frontline’ state, Pakistan; (d) the potentials of Geneva settlement; and (e) the implications of the post-cold war international situation for Afghanistan and for American policy objectives.

The study keeps in perspective the following postulates:

1) The United States policy options in Afghanistan had apparently been dictated by its own perceptions of the Soviet role and involvement in the region;

2) The crisis in Afghanistan following the Soviet intervention in 1979 seemed to have accentuated superpower confrontation, and the United
States sought to deal with the situation by initiating a number of economic and military programmes which had negative implications for the politics of the region;

3) The Carter and Reagan doctrines had been advanced to rationalize American intervention in the Third World with a view to containing the Soviet power and influence; and

4) The signing of the Geneva Accords was apparently made possible by the change in the Soviet attitude, which, in turn, brought forth positive American policy responses. However, the post-Soviet withdrawal phase of the Afghan crisis (1989-91) showed signs of disintegration and fragmentation to which the US policy responses seemed to be ambiguous.

The chapters of the study are designed in such a way as to address these surmises in a coherent manner. There are six chapters. The first chapter offers a survey of United States Third World policy within the overall foreign policy framework of the American state. It deals specifically with the doctrinal articulation of successive US administrations in regard to the American "role and responsibility" in the Third World regions. The chapter focuses on, among other things, the Soviet factor in historically conditioning United States Third World policy.

The second chapter investigates the historical setting of United States relations with and policy towards Afghanistan. It provides a comprehensive overview of the Afghan society and polity, and its complex pattern of relations with the United States and Soviet Union. The chapter, in general, makes an assessment of the post-war policy framework of the United States relations with Afghanistan until the Saur revolution in 1978. The third chapter begins with a brief analysis of the Afghan crisis during 1978-80
focusing on the rationale put forward for the Soviet intervention and Moscow's subsequent support to the Kabul regime. It then offers an overview of Jimmy Carter's foreign policy goals and objectives in the late 1970s. Within this general mode, the chapter specifically deals with the American policy responses to the developments in Afghanistan. It also provides the rationale of the Carter Doctrine and its particular relevance to the situation in Afghanistan.

The fourth chapter discusses the American policy towards Afghanistan during the Reagan administration. This is perhaps a crucial phase of United States involvement in the Afghan crisis. The chapter, therefore, examines in detail the United States perceptions and policy interventions in the context of the volatile political situation in Afghanistan. A main focus of this section is the Reagan Doctrine and its Third World context. The United States' views and policy in regard to the fighting mujahideen in Afghanistan are also analyzed here. Besides, the chapter tries to comprehend the nature and pattern of the United States' support to Pakistan against the backdrop of the Afghan crisis.

The fifth chapter keeps in focus the UN negotiations for a political settlement of the Afghan crisis which culminated in the Geneva Accords in 1988. The nature and provisions of the Accords are analyzed in the context of the views and interpretations given by Pakistan, Afghanistan, Soviet Union and the United States. An important factor which seemed to have facilitated the UN negotiations for a settlement in Afghanistan was the shift in Soviet foreign policy under Mikhail Gorbachev. This is examined within the overall perspective of the changes under way in Soviet Union during 1985-88. The
circumstances of the implementation of the Accords and the issues involved in the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan constitute other important aspects of this section. The chapter also discusses in detail the United States policy responses to the Accords and the nature and pattern of its support to the fighting mujahideen as well as Pakistan. Finally, it provides a general, but coherent view of the post-cold war framework of American foreign policy which had implications for its involvement in Afghanistan too. The sixth chapter provides a résumé of the findings of the study along with some general observations about the topic under investigation.

This work is to anchor its framework in policy studies. Hence, the mode of investigation is historical-analytical, relying on primary source material of the United States foreign policy. The study also brings together primary sources on Afghanistan, Soviet Union and the UN, wherever necessary. A wide range of authentic secondary sources are also used to prop up the main arguments of the study.