Preface

The central theme of the present thesis is to survey and analyze Indo-US political relations 1982-2002. India’s relations with the United States have followed a zigzag course, since Indian independence. Although India and the United States are the world’s largest democracies, their relationship was unstable and strained. There were many ups and downs, continued friendship and cooperation crossed by conflicts and irritants. Different strategic and ideological factors as well as global and regional issues have strained relations between the two countries, while bringing them together under different circumstances and times.

Despite the positive role-played by the United States in helping India to achieve independence, which was much appreciated by the Indians. But due to the decision of India to follow the policy of Non-alignment and not to join any military alliance did not find favour with the US leaders as the US was in search of allies and concluding military pacts with other countries in order to contain communist expansionism during the Cold War period. The politics of Cold War had a serious impact on Indo-US relations, as India’s policy of Non-alignment and its close relationship with the Soviet Union was the continuing focus of American distrust. The US arms and economic assistance to Pakistan was also one of the main factors preventing an improvement of Indo-US relations during the Cold War years. Tensions and conflict between India and the United States were also created from international forum.

In the post Cold War era, the two countries find themselves closer to each other, both India and the US have continue dialogue for more cooperative contacts and strategic cooperation. Although the development of Indo-US bilateral relations in the post Cold War period was based upon existing conditions with various containing elements, they have committed to extend economic cooperation into other field.

The barbaric attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 have proved to be a defining event in Indo-US relations. It has shifted the dynamics of US foreign policy discourse and has reinforced the growing solidarity and understanding between India and the US. They jointly strive to combat the menace
of international terrorism. The US has acknowledged India as a major power and has repeatedly signaled its intention to build further upon bilateral progress in all spheres of cooperation. Consequently, Indo-US relations are now improving faster, and are developing towards a positive direction and long-term convergence.

Against this background, my thesis is representing and attempting to analyze the Indo-US relations for the period between 1982-2002. It covers the administrative period of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s second term as Prime Minister and that of Atal Behari Vajpayee in India and President Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush in the United States of America. The study is divided into seven chapters, which emphasize mainly on the behaviour of the Indian Government, separately and specifically on their foreign policy towards the United States, to ascertain the causes and consequences of conflict and cooperation between them. The study is also attempted to present a comprehensive and objective view of the relations with regard to their entities of international system as India, a regional power and the United States, a superpower – on how they act and interact with each other, in both global and regional context, as well as to examine what were the factors behind them.

In the first chapter, an attempt is made to review the historical background of Indo-US political relations during the period of 1947-1980. The focus of this chapter is to examine and ascertain as to why the relationship between the two countries during this period have followed a zigzag course and was not very smooth and warm, despite the similarity of political set up, dedication to liberal democratic value, American declaration of Independence and the US support to the peoples struggle for freedom in India. Briefly, it can be explained that the major goals of India’s foreign policy for the protection of its freedom in foreign affairs and the security of the country are not favoured by the United States. This chapter also gives an account of the major irritants and different views in respect of their foreign policy on a number of regional and international issues, which prevented the two countries from establishing and improving friendly relations.

The second chapter concentrates upon India’s relations with the United States during Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s second term as Prime Minister (1980-1984). During this period, there were certain changes in Indo-US relations due to the changes in regional and international environment as well as in the leadership of both India and
the United States. These changes once again turned the Indo-US relations for the worse. Despite the two leaders of both the countries tried to evolve friendly and cooperative relations and regular exchange of visits by high level official of the two countries with desire to improve their bilateral relations But they did not success much, their relations were lacked of warmthness. The relations between them got strained due to their different stands on various issues. The differing perceptions of the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the fall of the Shah of Iran created more tension between the two countries. The decision of the US Government to provide arms assistance and sell sophisticated weapons to Pakistan also contributed to the tension between India and the United States. This chapter also focuses on several factors which contributed towards the straining and preventing the growth of Indo-US relations during 1980-1984.

The third chapter deals with Indo-US relations during Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s period (1985-1989). During this period, Indo-US Relations had shown a mixed output. Although, there were some changes in some aspects, but the Indian foreign policy during Rajiv Gandhi’s term remained unchanged. India’s foreign policy during his period was intensified and it enhanced India’s role in international community. At this time, both the countries wanted to improve their ties but their strategic and defence perspectives differed and their policies with respect to nuclear proliferation could not be reconciled. However, the two countries were able to build-up on their economic ties, especially with respect to US investment and trade in India. Cooperation was also witnessed in the fields of cultural exchange, science and technology and the control of the spread of narcotics.

The fourth chapter deals with Indo-US relations at the end of Cold War and under National Front Government (1989-1991). During this period, it was witnessed that India’s foreign policy towards the United States had changed. The cause of which was as improvement in Indo-US relations. The end of Cold War provided an opportunity to both India and America to re-assess and repair their bilateral relations, which was damaged by earlier Cold War perception. This chapter is also focus on the US attitude towards political insurgency in the Kashmir Valley and Indo-US response to the Gulf crisis.
In the fifth chapter, the focus of the study is on Indo-US relations during Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao’s Government (1991-1996). Although the study reveals that during this period, there was a turning point in Indian adjustment of its policy towards the United States. The US also changed its policy towards India, as it wanted a more developed bilateral relations and dialogue with India to commensurate with its growing role. But there continued a confrontational attitude between them which was visible since the Cold War period and continued prevailing in the post Cold War period. This chapter also attempts to present the positive aspects and convergence of interests, which helped to promote Indo-US relations and cooperation during the Rao period.

In the sixth chapter, an attempt is made to study Indo-US relations during the United Front Government (1996-1998). The study of this chapter reveals that although the period from 1996-1998 in India was the period of political uncertainty and instability, it did not impede positive improvement in Indo-US relations. The US tried to seek a new, friendlier chapter in its relations with India, stressing common interests and values, placing reduced emphasis on the nuclear issue, changing its position on Kashmir issue and deepening the bilateral relationship with India by initiating a series of high-level visits to India. During this period the US seemed to be more careful not to interfere in Indo-Pakistan tensions and had not done much in favour of Pakistan as ever. Significantly, the rise of Islamic fundamentalist and the US concerns with Islamic terrorism has also led to a convergence of Indian and US interests. This resulted in an improvement of Indo-US relations. This chapter also reveals that although during this short period, some differences continued to persist, the efforts from the leader of both countries to develop their bilateral relations was clearly visible as many agreements had been concluded.

In the seventh chapter, it refers to the study of Indo-US relations during the BJP Government (1998-2002). The study reveals that under the BJP Government, Indo-US relations saw a turning point. Although it suffered a serious tension for sometime after India conducted nuclear test in 1998, which brought on immediate sanction from the United States, the warming detectible afterward had not waned. Since 1999 Indo-US relations appears to be a remarkable turnaround. The US’s role in reducing tensions between India and Pakistan during the Kargil war was
appreciated by India. Finally, after half a century of estrangement, the two countries are getting along well with each other. The successful visit to India by President Bill Clinton in 2000 has registered a big push forward in Indo-US relations. The next US President George W. Bush has also continued the effort for friendlier and more cooperative ties. Since the event of 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, relationship between India and the United States has improved faster. Following the twin attacks of 11 September, the whole focus of Bush Administration shifted and the world geopolitics also changed. They have transformed the dynamics of regional security in South Asia as it tuned US’s policy towards South Asia upside down, bringing Pakistan to central stage and putting apart the Indo-US agenda on hold that has transformed Indo-US relations, into a new chapter. It resulted in enhancing many areas of cooperation and bilateral relations, which has so far held firm.

At the end of the thesis, I have provided a brief conclusion and summarization as well as an analysis of the overall development of Indo-US relations during 1982-2002.

In the preparation of my thesis, I have relied on all the existing available material related to the topic such as official documents, extracts of speeches and conferences, joint statement issued by the leaders of the two countries.