

Dennis Kux. *Estranged Democracies: India and the United States 1941–1991*. New Delhi: Sage Publications. 1993. Hardbound. Indian Rupees 375.00.

Cold war US-Soviet relations were characterised by a large gap between hostile talk and cautious action, though both countries backed and armed rival sides in wars in the third world. During the cold war US foreign policy was determined by the sole objective of containing Soviet territorial and ideological 'expansionism'. This was also the defining element in US-Indian subcontinent relations in the cold-war period. Thus the main reason for the estrangement in US-India relations is not hard to discern—while the US aggressively sought partners in its anti-Soviet alliance system, India nurtured its economic and military supplies relationship with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, while there persisted a fundamental conflict between Pakistan and India over the Kashmir issue, Pakistan participated in the US sponsored anti-Soviet alliance system and gained from US military and economic assistance.

This is not to deny that 'support for democracy' had some importance in US external relations during the Fifties and Sixties, though it reflected, mainly, the perennial oscillation in US external policy between 'idealpolitik' and 'realpolitik'. However, the overarching concern of US external policy, during the cold-war period, was always dictated by an aggressive anti-communism. For some time, the US was seriously concerned with the success of Indian democracy as a model for the future of Asia as against Chinese communism, but reversed this position in the Seventies. There were also shifts in US perceptions of its global interests depending on the political party in power, for example, President Eisenhower extended the US anti-Soviet alliance system while the Democrats later downgraded it; President Carter made improvement in Pakistan-US relations contingent on respect for US legislation prohibiting plutonium reprocessing and uranium enrichment, but soon reversed this position following the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan.

This book tells the story of the evolution of US-India relations from 1941, when New Delhi and Washington first established diplomatic relations, until the collapse of the Soviet Union and the cold war in 1991. The author has been a career diplomat with wide experience in South Asia and so writes with a privileged insight into US-India relations. The outcome is an easy-to-read narration of the diplomatic interaction between the US and India for over half a century. The author draws on declassified official US documents for his earlier chapters, which are also the most interesting.

The book starts with chronicling the early interactions between the US and Indian national leaders prior to independence. Roosevelt's primary concern with winning the war clashed with the Indian leaders desire for independence. This left both sides disappointed—the US because of the Indian attitude towards the war

effort, and the Indians because of lack of support from the US especially during the Quit India movement. The mutual disappointment continued in the early years of Indian independence mainly because of India's unprincipled stand on Kashmir which conflicted sharply with Nehru's loudly articulated moralism.

The book provides interesting insights into the Indian's deep-rooted and almost 'pathological' fear of Pakistan, which clouded their relationship with the US: In a meeting with Foster Dulles Nehru is quoted as calling Pakistanis "a martial people and a fanatical people who could readily attack India". Meantime, the US regarded Pakistan as a useful ally in its crusade against communism. US-India relations improved significantly in subsequent years and reached a climax under Kennedy following the Indian military fiasco with China. US aid to India attained record levels but US efforts to maintain good relations with Pakistan remained a sore point in US-India relations. By the end of the decade of the Sixties the optimism generated during the Kennedy years gave way to disenchantment on the US side and to mutual mistrust, which reached a peak under Nixon, in particular over the crisis in East Pakistan, which the US perceived as "duplicitous (Indian) action".

The ups and downs in US-India relations in subsequent years are similarly recorded eloquently in later chapters. In these years India attained overwhelming military strength in the subcontinent with a sizeable nuclear arsenal, missile delivery systems and satellite capability. And it has gained strong international influence which it used to undercut Pakistan's international standing. But does this mean that different rules of international law now apply to India? In the concluding chapter, the author seems to suggest precisely this. Instead of searching for principled and lasting solutions to regional problems, which alone can be the basis for peace in the region, the author advises that the US should recognise India as a "significant Asian power" and respect its "security sensitivities" and to avoid "renewal of a major arms relationship with Pakistan" though conceding, in the same paragraph, that Indian apprehensions about a military threat from Pakistan may be "irrational and illogical".

In the short-run though, US policy in the region is focused on proliferation concerns. The US appears to be suspicious of Indian nuclear capability. More importantly, the US is eager to play a mediatory role between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir issue and so, to address the root cause of nuclear proliferation in the region. Progress on this issue will establish the future path of US-India relations.

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