Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies during the Cold War by Zorawar Daulet Singh, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. xiii + 398, Rs 845

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Realpolitik and its terminology have dominated the discourse on the conduct and behaviour of states in 'anarchical' international environment. Concepts like balance of power (BoP) and security dilemma continue to draw the attention of students of international politics. It has been argued, or presumed, that in the security-driven environment of the international system, foreign policies of individual states are externally driven. Since the conduct of policies and behaviour of a state in international politics is primarily driven by security concerns, the role and significance of domestic politics, beliefs of leaders of states, their identities and vision are considered insignificant. The pursuing of a policy based on domestic structure or beliefs of leaders, or their vision in an anarchical structure may not be in state's interest. As Kenneth Waltz states: 'Because structures select by rewarding some behaviours and punishing others, outcomes cannot be inferred from intentions and behaviours.'[1] States, therefore, have no option but to play by the rules of the anarchical international system.

The understanding of international politics and the debates on the Cold War have expanded since the end of the latter. Scholars now argue that the domain of international politics is not limited to BoP, security dilemma or enhancing security, as important as these may remain.

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Ideas, beliefs and vision of the leaders of the states have a role in shaping international politics. According to Peter Katzenstein, the traditional and narrow definition of security 'tends to focus on material capabilities and the use and control of military force by states', but new emerging scholarship has articulated different views about national security that focus on 'unconventional, broader definitions of national security'.[2] Once the broader security concerns are included in the study, it opens up space for analysing the role of beliefs, ideas and understanding of different parameters of security and approaches to them. Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane argue that the role of ideas and beliefs in foreign policies of the states cannot be refuted. Agreeing with constructivists that identities and interests are 'endogenous to interaction' of actors in international politics, not exogenous, they maintain that 'the issue is not whether identities matter but *how* they matter, and how their effects can be systematically studied by social scientist (emphasis in original).'[3]

The role of ideas, beliefs, identities and norms in foreign policy and international politics has be analysed quite well in general. However, Indian foreign policymaking and its composition have not received much attention. The book, *Power and Diplomacy: India's Foreign Policies during the Cold War*, by Zorawar Daulet Singh is thus a good beginning in this direction. It compares and analyses the foreign policies of two significant leaders of India, Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, during the Cold War period when their impact can be observed and accounted for. In this book, Singh helps to answer the questions raised by Goldstein and Keohane. The book is about 'searching for India's mental maps during the Cold War' (p. 18). To do so, six significant foreign policy decisions as well as the decision-making processes followed by Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi have been analysed.

According to him, too much focus on non-alignment in Indian foreign policy has been at the cost of overlooking other aspects, including the changes in the Indian foreign policy during the Cold War. Mainly, there was a change 'in the *modes of regional policy behavior*' in India's foreign policy. It witnessed a 'shift' specifically 'from projecting itself initially in an extra-regional *peacemaker* role during the Nehru period… to that of a largely sub-continental *security seeker* in the Indira Gandhi period' (p. 2). By deploying the process-tracing mechanism, there are a few ways to identify the loci of the change, namely, change in domestic political structure, in ideology, in external environment and in the ideas or what he calls 'role conception' of the leadership. It was the latter that

differentiated Nehru and Indira Gandhi from each other and shaped their respective foreign policies. Therefore, the book is an inside-out approach to foreign policymaking.

The explanation offered in the book is a comparative analysis of the two leaders' 'image' of the country, the region, and the world. Such an undertaking requires identifying the beliefs and visions of the guiders of the country's foreign policies, and then establishing linkages between domestic politics, culture and the vision of the leaders for the region and the world. The two leaders discussed in the book operated in an almost similar external environment but pursued different foreign policies; and Singh offers some answers to this.

Nehru's approach towards politics was based on 'developing an alternative regional philosophy of interstate relations when security dilemma could be muted in both Asia and India's immediate vicinity' (p. 21). Though the policy of non-alignment was followed after India got independence, it was not the one and only unified policy for foreign affairs. Rolled out to protect India's strategic autonomy and to pursue independent foreign policy, 'it still left open a range of possibilities or agency' (p. 15). Nehru's vision was global and he wanted to create an exemplary model of Indian polity. He questioned the existing understanding of international politics and wanted 'a move towards progressive order' (p. 39). According to the author, Nehru's approach to foreign policy was shaped by three main beliefs: (i) Asia-centric internationalism; (ii) rejection of the traditional BoP imagery of international life; and (iii) expression of an alternative concept of security, which he called 'the area of peace', and a preference for an ethical statecraft based on persuasion over coercion (p. 41). These beliefs made Nehru look at the larger picture of security and peace. For him, security was 'an indivisible process' that could not be achieved by 'balance of power idea which produced an action–reaction dynamic' that leads to war (p. 56). In fact, even incidents like the partition of the subcontinent or the outbreak of the Cold War could not change Nehru's beliefs or his vision of India and Asia at large.

Indira Gandhi's approach, on the other hand, was not globalist. She was less guided by the aspiration of playing an active role in world politics. She 'aimed to develop an India-centric sub-regional order where external involvement could be restrained and Indian leadership asserted' (p. 21). Her understanding of the role of India in world politics was shaped by three core interrelated beliefs: (i) a narrow definition of India's national interests and a regional image centered on the subcontinent;

(ii) a divisible conception of security and an inclination to leverage the BoP for geopolitical advantage; and (iii) an inclination to employ coercive means to solve disputes or to pursue geopolitical ends in South Asia (p. 198). To counter the arguments that the 1962 war with China and the 1965 war with Pakistan, along with some other factors, were responsible for the change in Indian foreign policy in post-Nehru period, the author argues that though 'changes in the external environment certainly do alter the cost–benefit calculus for states', 'it is the policy makers' goal preferences and choices that ultimately matter' (p. 209). This is in line with the argument of Goldstein and Keohane that 'ideas continue to guide action in absence of costly innovation'.[4]

Indira Gandhi's approach was more concerned about meeting the immediate challenges and using them instrumentally to secure India's interests. Thus, it was 'to prioritize security' of India's 'immediate periphery' (p. 217). Despite not much change in the internal and external environments, the difference in the vision and role of India in the region and the world envisaged by the two leaders led them to pursue different foreign policies. Singh also points out that changes 'emerge from policymakers' beliefs and images relating to their state's interaction with its external environment' (p. 2). This is in consonance with the argument forwarded by constructivists that 'social actors respond adequately or appropriately to the situation in which they find themselves' and 'the situations in which social actors find themselves are not determinative'.[5]

In the book, Singh substantiates his arguments with case studies. Nehru did not believe that the crisis of 1950 with Pakistan was definitive enough to affect India's foreign policy. He argued that 'Indian statecraft would not stoop to Pakistan's level' (p. 75) where the minorities were being targeted. Nor did he panic at the formation of Pakistan–United States (US) alliance in 1954. He saw the crisis 'through his prior Asian images rather than narrow subcontinental image' (p. 104) and approached it accordingly. Again, actively involving India to defuse the Formosa crisis of 1954–55, between China and the US, was according to his belief of India's 'peacemaker role' and to form 'a stable Asian order' (p. 144). Nehru, by employing the BoP approach, could have cozied up either with the US or China and extracted some aid which was required at the moment. He negated the BoP theory, arguing that it did not guarantee security. Nehru's policy also provides evidence for the fact that BoP has not been universal, as now many scholars argue.[6]

Indira Gandhi had a different approach towards BoP, along with a different vision for the Asian order. She approached the Vietnam War of 1965–66 with 'a combination of instrumental motives aimed at extracting economic and military assistance from two super powers, and balance-of-power motives aimed at arresting Chinese influence in South East Asia' (p. 225). Despite the Ministry of External Affairs suggestion against getting involved too deeply in the Bangladesh crisis, Indira Gandhi 'was receptive' to the idea of 'exploring policy option of exploiting the crisis' (p. 274). Her approach towards Sikkim was that of a security seeker (p. 316). She preferred to focus on immediate security concerns and restricted the role of India to securing the subcontinent, that is, India as a 'security seeker' and not as a 'peacemaker'.

Constructivists reason that the interests of actors are 'endogenous to interaction'. However, what understanding or ideas inform the formation of the interests in such 'interactions'? Actors would be having some identity or belief along with which they enter into the interaction. They will conduct themselves according to a priori understanding and image of the self, the situation and the world. *Power and Diplomacy* helps to understand the role and significance of a priori understanding of the situation and image of the region, and the world at large, in Nehru and Indira Gandhi's foreign policies. It would be interesting though to explore what made Indira Gandhi break away from the Nehruvian approach in a brief period. If the context was more or less same, what influenced/changed Indira's 'role conception'?

The book thus looks at a constructivist understanding of Indian foreign policy with a fresh perspective. It helps to address some methodological issues about how to determine the role of ideas and belief in foreign policy, as well as in decision making. It indeed makes for an interesting read. It is hoped that this book provokes further intriguing studies on Indian foreign policy to enhance the understanding of its peculiar nature, including changes over time.

Notes

1. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, California: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979, pp. 73–4.
2. Peter J. Katzenstein, 'Introduction', in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identities in World Politics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 9–10.

3. Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane, 'Ideas and Foreign Policy: An Analytical Framework', in Judith Goldstein and Robert Keohane (eds), *Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993, p. 6.
4. Ibid., p. 5.
5. David Dessler and John Owen, 'Constructivism and the Problem of Explanation: A Review Article', *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 2005, p. 598.
6. See Daniel H. Nixon, 'Review: The Balance of Power in the Balance', *World Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2009, pp. 330–59.