

SOME SELECTED BOOK REVIEWS

PAKISTAN'S IDENTITY CRISIS MAKING SENSE OF PAKISTAN
by Farzana Shaikh, C. Hurst and Co., London, 2009: 274.

Reviewed by ARVIND GUPTA in *Strategic Analysis*. 33.6 (2009): 920-925.

Pakistan is passing through a major crisis. Under US pressure, Pakistan's army has launched major military operations against the Pakistani Taliban, its own citizens. Nearly 3 million people have been displaced from Swat and neighbouring areas of Malakand district in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). The increasing radicalization of Pakistan has led many analysts to ask whether Pakistan is heading towards a collapse.

How did Pakistan reach such a state that people are questioning whether it will even survive? Farzana Shaikh's *Making Sense of Pakistan* is timely as it gives the reader a deep historical background to Pakistan's multiple crises. Her main thesis is that even though Pakistan was conceived on the basis of religion as a homeland for Indian Muslims, there is no consensus as to the role of Islam in state and society. Pakistan is suffering from an identity crisis in terms of the role of Islam in state and society. Nor is there consensus in Pakistan on what it means to be in Pakistan. Multiple interpretations have been attached to the meaning of Islam. This has led to stresses and strains within the society. The state has tried to interpret Islam in an exclusivist framework and thereby it has tried to distinguish Pakistan from the syncretic and pluralist tendencies in South Asia. This has led to growing rifts among the different ethnic and linguistic groups which form Pakistan today. The radical element and the military, the dominant institution, have teamed together to construct a Pakistan which is too narrow in its concept to accommodate the diversities. As a result, Pakistan has faced an identity crisis which has sharpened over the years and resulted in societal tensions. The many ills of Pakistan can be traced to this unresolved identity crisis. Farzana Shaikh, an Associate Fellow at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, and presently a Visitor at the Institute of Advanced Study in Princeton, is a well-known scholar on Pakistan affairs; she has published and lectured widely on Islam in South Asia. *Making Sense of Pakistan* is an enthralling attempt at understanding the Pakistani state and society.

The book has an introduction, six main chapters and an epilogue. Together these chapters provide a perceptive account of Pakistan's chequered history seen through the prism of its contested Islamic identity. In the introduction, the author explores the Muslim identity among a section of the Muslims living in the vast subcontinent of India. The Mughal courts were cosmopolitan as they sought to build an inclusive and pluralist identity. However, the decline of the Mughals and the onset of British colonial masters made the Muslims of North India retreat into a shell and become introspective. Out of this introspection, lasting for over 200 years, emerged two main streams of thought: one inclusive and the other exclusive and narrow. Shah Waliullah (1703–1762) wanted to rid Indian Muslims of corrupt practices which they had acquired on account of living in close proximity with the Hindus and favoured a puritan form of Islam and held that there was 'one-and-only-one' way to Islam. The other view, propounded by thinkers like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (1888–1958), took universal Islam to mean pluralist Islam. The founder of Jamaat-i-Islami, Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903–1979), lent support to the narrower version of Islam. None of these thinkers actually got as far as demanding a separate nation for the Indian Muslims. It was Mohammad Ali Jinnah (1876–1948) who introduced the concept of a separate nation for the Muslims in India equal to the so-called Hindu nation. The author says, 'The building blocks that shaped the idea of Pakistan – community, nation and power – though largely informed by Islam, were all strongly contested' (p. 2). In the end, it was the narrower ideological vision that won. This was the beginning of Pakistan's multiple problems.

The glue of religion that was supposed to have bound Pakistan in an integral nation did not prevent Pakistan's disintegration in 1971. Pakistan 'started life ridden with contradictions' (p. 3). Though designed as a homeland for the Muslims of India, Pakistan refused to implement a 'right of return' policy for the Muslims of India. Pakistan became embroiled in tensions between the Muslims who had migrated from India at the time of partition of India – the Mohajirs and those who were already living in the territories which formed Pakistan. These tensions persist to this day. The tendency in Pakistan has been to impose the ever narrowing concept of who is a Muslim. This has led to the disenfranchisement of the Ahmediyas and the sharpening of the sectarian divide in the country in which thousands of innocent lives have been claimed.

In the chapter 'Who is a Pakistani?', the author explores the vexing question of the rights of non-Muslims in Islamic Pakistan. Her conclusion is that progressively their rights have been diluted. The discrimination against non-Muslims was visible from the very beginning of the formation of Pakistan. The first Constitution barred the non-Muslims from occupying the post of President of Pakistan. There was intense debate in Pakistan over whether non-Muslims should have separate electorates. Although the 1962 Constitution did away with the issue of separate electorates, the 'provisions were rendered meaningless in a system which ruled out direct, universal franchise' (p. 74). Pakistan's first military dictator, Ayub Khan, who usurped power in 1958, tried to undertake a secular nation-building project but his divisive economic policies and the 'one unit' experiment managed to widen the gulf between East and West Pakistan which eventually led to the civil war in 1971. In the wake of the 1971 civil war, the secular and pluralist definition of 'the Pakistani' was given up (p. 75). Many Pakistanis felt that with the separation of Bengalis, it would become easier to construct a Muslim identity for Pakistan.

General Zia ul Haq, who ousted Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, followed with an aggressive programme of Islamization. He set up *sharia* courts where the evidence of a non-Muslim was only half the value of the evidence of a Muslim. Under the infamous blasphemy laws, he made insult to Prophet Mohammad punishable with death. This generated acute insecurity among the non-Muslims. He revived the separate electorate system which had been done away with earlier. The school curriculum was revised and a distorted history was taught to inculcate the feeling among children that non-Muslims do not qualify as complete Pakistanis. According to the author, 'This has created an environment in which non-Muslims have been steadily relegated to second-class citizens' (p. 78). Neither Benazir Bhutto nor Nawaz Sharif and Musharraf have had the courage to do away with the blasphemy laws. In fact, Nawaz Sharif wanted to formalize Zia's Islamization programme by formalizing the application of *Sharia* laws. Musharraf, who described himself as a moderate Muslim and took pride in the concept of 'enlightened moderation', was not able to roll back Zia's Islamization although he succeeded in abolishing the separate electorate system in 2002.

In the chapter 'Burden of Islam', the author deals with the role of Islam in Pakistani politics. In the early years of Pakistan, the

'secularists' who were true to Jinnah's inclusive vision and the Islamist forces represented by Jammāt and the *ulama* were locked in 'holy battles'. The Objectives Resolution which has formed the preamble of all Pakistani constitutions, including the present one, is a clear statement that Pakistan is an Islamic state and the state is supposed to help the Muslims to order their lives in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Thus the state has a distinct role in promoting an Islamic identity for its citizens. However, there have been differences within Pakistan of how this role is to be played by the state. The Islamist forces have sought to impose a narrow vision of an Islamic society in which large sections of the population are treated as non-Muslims. Even a person like Z.A. Bhutto, who was known as a wayward Muslim because of his taste for the 'good' life, had to give in to the demands of the religious forces. It was during this time that Pakistan was explicitly declared as an Islamic state with Islam as the state religion. In order to survive politically, he laid the foundation of Zia's Islamization programme by promulgating *Nizam-e-Mustafa*, a social code championed by the *ulama* (p. 98). The 1972 Constitution which is still in force incorporates the idea of 'divine sovereignty' and discounts the idea of democracy as understood academically. Thus, Bhutto started the Islamization of the society while Zia followed up with the Islamization of the state. That trend has continued. Zia's contribution to the Islamization of Pakistan lay in the fact that he Islamized the state, created a new Islamic bureaucracy, and established a nexus between the military regime and the *ulama* (p. 113). Zia used the Afghan war to further the agenda of Islamization. The state got directly involved in helping the anti-Soviet jihad being carried out by the mujahideen.

A large number of madrassas were set up with state, private, as well as foreign funding to train the jihadis to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. When the Soviets eventually left Afghanistan, the vast infrastructure was still intact. It was this infrastructure that produced the Taliban, supported by the Pakistani military and intelligence. The Taliban were the creation of the Pakistani state, then guided by Benazir Bhutto, and were regarded by the state as strategic assets to be used against the West and even against India. What would be the economic and social policies of a state which professed to be Islamic? The author explores this vital question in the chapter on 'The Dilemmas of Development'. Z.A. Bhutto packaged his socialist and egalitarian policies as 'Islamic socialism' (p. 117). The author

says, 'the debate on economic and social policies has been notable for its absence of consensus regarding the meaning of Islam' (p. 117). Parties like the Jamaat-i-Islami were opposed to both 'Ayub's version of modern Islam' as well as 'socialist readings' of Islam. They championed private property and free enterprise as being 'fundamental to the economic objectives of Islam' (p. 128). Zia, after ousting Bhutto in 1977, made a distinct move towards dismantling the 'Islamic socialist' system of Bhutto in favour of the 'Islamic capitalist' system. A large number of Islamic charities came about during Zia's time. They benefited greatly from the large-scale funding from the Middle East and from state funding in the name of conducting jihad against the Soviets. One of the main points of discord has been how much of a role the state has in an Islamic socio-economic system. In recent years the debate has shifted to the role Islam can play in preventing the deterioration of the moral fibre of the society faced with a nexus between the civil and military institutions. The economic interests of the military have grown over the years. The military has emerged as a political class with its own vested interests. In particular, the Islamists think that the virus of corruption in Pakistan can be contained only with a strong dose of Islam. One of the most talked about phenomena in Pakistan has been the role of madrassas. Historically madrassas in South Asia have played a role in forging the Muslim identity. However, in recent years madrassas have come to be seen as factories for producing jihadis and suicide bombers at a tender age. Ayub had set up a committee in 1962 to reform the curriculum in madrassas. The committee underlined the importance of religious education in the context of creating an Islamic nation in Pakistan (p. 142). Zia also appointed a committee in 1979 to look into the question of madrasa education. He was convinced that the purpose of religious education was to strengthen the Islamic identity of the state. The *ulama* were, however, adamant that the control over religious education should not lie with the state. The *ulama*, who regard themselves as custodians of Pakistan's Islamic identity, have a grip over Pakistani society through the madrassas. They would resist any state control over madrassas. Even Musharraf tried to reform the madrasa education but failed to do so.

Pakistan's unresolved identity crisis had an impact on Pakistan's military also. The military has used Islam without restraint to achieve its objectives. The communal notion that Pakistan was construed as

a Muslim nation to counter 'Hindu India' has deeply affected the military's anti-India mindset. Likewise, the army has supported Islamic groups carrying out jihad against Afghanistan and India over the years. Although the Pakistani Army is considered to be professional, it has over the years contributed significantly to the professionalization of jihad. The army has used Islam for its expansionist ethos. These ideas are explored at length by the author in the chapter 'Between Crescent and Sword: Professionalizing Jihad'. The Pakistani Army has used the language of Islam and the irregular force of Islamic volunteers to carry out proxy wars in Afghanistan and Kashmir (p. 153). It used the Pathan tribals in 1947 to attack Kashmir. In 1965, it sent thousands of irregulars to destabilize Kashmir. It carried out its brutal war in East Pakistan in 1971 with the help of Razakars, the Jamaat-i-Islami cadres (p. 154). The pattern of recruitment in the Pakistani military has also been changing. Large sections of its recruits come from areas where religious parties hold sway.

In the last chapter 'Demons from Abroad: Enemies and Allies', the author notes perceptively and less commonly that Pakistan's 'foreign policy has been dictated by issues of national identity' (p. 180). Pakistan since its inception has been trapped in a 'negative identity' of defining itself as something which is 'not India'. It has sought parity with India in every respect, including military parity which has resulted in it acquiring nuclear weapons. The quest for parity has led to a deeply entrenched anti-India mindset in Pakistan's military and political establishments. The author notes that Pakistan's military regimes have seen conflict with India as a civilisational issue and have tightened the state's link with Islam (p. 184). Pakistan has sought to challenge India, whom it sees as a 'Hindu' state despite its secular credentials, by projecting its 'Muslim identity'. This has made the conflict over Kashmir intractable (p. 185). After 1971, Pakistan sought to sharpen its Islamic identity by linking up with West Asia. It also projected itself as a protector of Islam and called its quest for nuclear bombs an effort to acquire an 'Islamic bomb' to protect the Islamic civilization. The conflict over Kashmir, the author notes, has sharpened ethnic tensions within Pakistan as it emerged that the support for Kashmir was 'lukewarm' amongst the Bengalis. In order to overcome its asymmetry *vis-à-vis* India, Pakistan has sought to enlist the support of the United States but has become an unwitting tool in the US geostrategic agenda. It

has sought to overcome its weakness *vis-à-vis* India by forging closer alliances with the wider community of Muslims in the name of Islam (p. 193). Its quest for nuclear weapons – considered essential to counter India – made it an international pariah (p. 196). It hoped to increase its international status through an alliance with the United States by becoming its frontline state; the result was precisely the opposite. However, the tide changed once again in its favour after 9/11 when the United States forced Pakistan to become its partner in the global war on terrorism. Unfortunately for Pakistan, the blowback from Afghanistan and the rise of radicalism within the country has posed a serious threat to its integrity. Pakistan's identity crisis has also affected its policy towards Afghanistan. Pakistan–Afghanistan relations have been bedevilled since 1947 on the issue of the Durand Line which no Afghanistan government, including the pro-Pak Taliban regime, has ever recognized as an international border. Pakistan has tried to install friendly regimes in Afghanistan in order to gain strategic depth *vis-à-vis* India. Its effort has been to blunt Pushtun nationalism by incorporating the Pushtuns of the NWFP into government structures. It has dubiously nurtured the Pushtun groups like the Taliban in the hope of blunting Pushtun nationalism and has used the jihad card to achieve its aim. The strategy has failed as the Taliban in Pakistan have turned against the state in the recent past. The Pakistan army is embroiled in a deadly conflict with the Pakistani Taliban groups. Yet, Pakistani security services maintain a calculated ambiguity towards the Taliban as they are regarded as an asset against India and the West.

Making Sense of Pakistan is a thought-provoking effort by the author to examine the identity question as the root cause of Pakistan's multiple crises. But one could also argue that over the last 60 years, Pakistan has made its choice: to continue as a narrowly defined Islamic state. No one in Pakistan appears serious in challenging the role of Islam in Pakistan. The civil society is too weak to have a meaningful impact on Pakistan's polices which are dominated by the army. So, the author may not be correct in saying that the differences over interpretation of Islam have not been settled. Similarly, the majority opinion in Pakistan is comfortable with the notion of parity and rivalry with India. Hundreds of thousands of children studying in madrassas controlled by hard-line Islamic parties and groups are being schooled very differently. The liberal Pakistanis may have sympathy with the author's view that Pakistan's

identity crisis remains unresolved, but how many ordinary Pakistanis actually think so?

A MILITARY HISTORY OF INDIA AND SOUTH ASIA: FROM THE EAST INDIA COMPANY TO THE NUCLEAR ERA by **Daniel P. Marston and Chandar S. Sundaram (eds)**, **Indiana University Press, Bloomington, IN, 2007: 256.**

Reviewed by HARSH V PANT, *Asian Affairs*. XL.III. November 2009: 3-11.

India is increasingly described as a rising power in the international system. Its economy is one of the fastest growing in the world; it is a nuclear weapon state, a status that is being grudgingly accepted by the world; its armed forces are highly professional, on the way towards rapid modernisation; and its vibrant democratic institutions, with the world's second-largest Muslim population, are attracting global attention. India is gradually coming to terms with its increasing weight in the international system. Sustained rates of high economic growth over the last decade have given India greater resources to devote to its defence requirements. India's real GDP has surged by an annual average of nearly 9 percent in the last five years, and it is on track to emerge as the fastest growing economy in the world in 2008–2013, averaging annual expansion of 6.3 percent. India has recently emerged as one of the largest arms buyers in the world and is expected to make over \$435 billion of arms purchases in 2009–2013. Over the past two decades, military expenditure has been around 2.75 percent but with unprecedentedly higher rates of economic growth over the last decade, the resources allocated to defence have grown significantly. Indian armed forces have long been asking for an allocation of 3 percent of the nation's GDP. This has received broad political support in recent years. The Indian Prime Minister has been explicit, suggesting that "if our economy grows at about 8 percent per annum, it will not be difficult for [the Indian government] to allocate about 3 percent of GDP for national defence." The Indian Parliament has also underlined the need to aim for the target of 3 percent of the GDP. With the world's fourth largest military and one of the biggest defence budgets, India has been in the midst of a huge defence modernisation programme for nearly a decade, with billions of dollars spent on the latest high-

tech military technology, and is viewed these days as the new centre for defence procurement. Defence companies looking to sell 'big ticket' items have made India their favoured destination. The spending is diverse across all three services.

India has already started to use its military capabilities to further its interests and it is imperative to have a clearer understanding about the kind of military power India is likely to become. For this, the military history of India needs to be examined closely. Yet Indian military history remains a much ignored area of study. The volume under review goes a long way in filling this void by examining not only military historical issues but also tackling contemporary issues such as the Sino-India and the India-Pakistan conflicts as well as Indian nuclear policy. The editors argue that these later chapters "demonstrate how a former colony. . . has struggled to become a mature state in terms of military power and capability."

The historical chapters on the expansion of the East India Company, the martial races and the role of the Indian Army during the First and Second World Wars shed new light on these subjects and make readers aware of new historiography. The other chapters, though interesting, often tread old ground. The final four chapters dealing with contemporary issues in South Asia fail to bring anything new to the discussion. Like most edited volumes, this book also suffers from a fundamental weakness – lack of a framework around which various chapters could have been woven. This is especially problematic here as the editors have tried to bring together military history and contemporary political and security issues in South Asia. Often it seems that the chapters have been put together on an ad hoc basis. It is not entirely clear why there is a chapter on Sri Lanka but none on Pakistan, Nepal or Bangladesh. It is also not readily evident why the final three chapters on India demonstrate India's emergence as a mature military power. India's involvement in counter-insurgency operations ever since its independence, as well as its being one of the largest contributors to the UN peacekeeping operations, are glaring omissions. The first nine chapters would probably have made a much more cohesive book on Indian military history, focusing primarily on the period from the emergence of the East India Company to the end of the Raj.

India is a major military power by virtue of its growing capabilities but it is yet to learn how to effectively deploy its military capabilities in the service of its national interests. Indian military

history remains important in understanding why this is so. This book takes a few, tentative steps towards improving our understanding of the factors that continue to shape Indian behaviour in the military realm. But as Stephen Cohen points out in his foreword, the field of Indian military history “still awaits the grand synthesis.”

INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURS: TOWARDS A NEW PARTNERSHIP by Ashok K. Behuria (ed.), **Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, 2008: 272.**

Reviewed by SATISH KUMAR in *Strategic Analysis*. 33.4 (2009).

Book that consists of a collection of articles on current affairs runs the risk of being outdated by the time it is published, and more so by the time it is reviewed. Fortunately, there are sections of this book which retain their value and validity many months after the conference in November 2008 for which the book was prepared.

The book provides quite a comprehensive coverage of the political and strategic situation in India’s neighbourhood as of late 2008. Written by young scholars of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, the short and crisp articles give a fairly objective picture, although there is scope for deeper analysis in some articles. The theme of the first section of the book is the changing political context in India’s neighbourhood. There is no doubt that the political context in nearly all countries of South Asia has changed in the last few years. In fact it is changing so fast in a country like Pakistan that it is difficult to keep pace with it in a book of this kind. However, the book still makes a commendable effort in this direction. Vishal Chandra’s article, ‘Will Taliban Talk?’, captures the dynamics of the Afghanistan situation quite well. He rightly brings out that the failure of the Western strategy, the inability of the Bonn process to produce an ethnically inclusive arrangement, and the ascendance of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)-backed Taliban are the main factors which have caused the current stalemate. But he poses the question of whether the Taliban will talk. Perhaps by September 2008, the Taliban were already talking through Saudi Arabia. A more pertinent question is whether there is anything like the so-called ‘good’ Taliban who are worth talking to. In a situation where a ‘good Taliban’ is a contradiction in terms, it is obvious that the willingness of the Karzai

regime and his Western supporters to talk to the Taliban means conceding defeat. Does the future lie in sharing power with the Taliban or does it lie in conceding total power to the Taliban? These are questions which will need to be answered by scholars like Vishal Chandra. Sreeradha Datta's article on 'Army's Proxy Rule and Roadblocks to Democracy in Bangladesh' duly emphasizes the prominent role played by the army in post-Mujib Bangladesh. Her article would be many times richer if she could also explore the sources of strength and sustenance of the army, whether they are embedded in the economic and sociological structures of the country, or whether they are external to the country. It is also important to examine the reasons which led to the growing political influence of the religious parties and whether there are any long-term linkages between them and the Bangladesh Army.

Udai Bhanu Singh's article on 'Myanmar: Junta Ruling the Roost' is important. He has pointed out that the new constitution of Myanmar, which was promulgated in May 2008 after a referendum, had taken 14 years to be drafted. It would have been useful if he had also given the main features of the constitution so that an assessment could be made as to how far it is more democratic than the previous one. Besides, the strategic competitiveness between China and India in Myanmar could have been brought out more sharply.

M. Mayilvaganan has explored an important subject in his article, 'Sri Lanka: Can Rajapaksa Achieve Peace Through War?'. He has examined the internal political dynamics in Sri Lanka in great detail. Perhaps, his article has a heavy bias in favour of Tamils and against the Sinhala leadership. Unfortunately, however, his analysis has been fast overtaken by events and some of his assumptions have been proved wrong.

The second section of the book, 'Common Challenges and Prospects of Cooperation', offers some useful material. Medha Bisht's article on 'Poverty and Governance in South Asia' brings out very well the challenge of poverty in South Asia and some of the reasons for it. However, it does not deal at all with how the South Asian countries can cooperate to meet this challenge, whereas a lot can be said on this important subject.

Sumita Kumar's article on 'Prospects for Energy Cooperation' gives many useful pointers about the direction in which energy cooperation in different sectors can take place. But further research

needs to be done in identifying the obstacles which stand in the way of concretizing this cooperation and how to remove them. Such a study can be found very useful by the governments of the region and perhaps by South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as an organization. The problem of migration and implications for national and regional stability has been discussed very well by M. Mayilvaganan in his article, 'Migration: Dynamics and Challenges'. Some indications as to how the ill-effects of this phenomenon can be mitigated have been given in the last part of this chapter. It may be helpful to find out how far those ideas are already being implemented and how to improve upon them. Anand Kumar has analysed the problem of the low level of intra-regional trade in South Asia in his article, 'Prospects of Trade Integration in South Asia', quite competently.

After examining the challenges before South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA), he spells out the various steps that could be taken to facilitate intra-SAARC trade. He also reminds us of the grim reality, as per a recent study of the Asian Development Bank, that India and Pakistan are not the most important markets for each other. More than 60 per cent of the increase in exports to the region for both India and Pakistan is directed towards Bangladesh. Hence the need for innovative steps to stimulate trade between the two largest economies of the region. Sreeradha Datta has undertaken a wide-ranging examination of the impact of climate change in South Asia in her article on 'Fighting Climate Change Together'.

The impact on Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Myanmar, and Afghanistan has been brought out very well. However, nothing has been said about India and Pakistan. What does it mean? Should these two countries feel completely free of any anxiety on account of climate change? Nevertheless, the article deals with a subject which is generally ignored. It therefore makes a valuable contribution in raising the level of awareness on this issue in the South Asian region, particularly when regional cooperation in this area is negligible.

Anand Kumar's second article on 'The Common Challenge of Terrorism' is again very well written. He has quite aptly pointed out that terrorism in South Asia arises from (i) religious fundamentalism, (ii) left-wing extremism, and (iii) secessionism. He has examined every category in terms of its causes in respective countries. Terrorism having emerged as the foremost security threat

in the whole region, much more attention needs to be devoted to the cures, i.e. steps that need to be taken to meet this threat. The threat of terrorism emanating from religious extremism, for instance, cannot be met except through cooperation between all countries of the region. The role of religion in politics needs to be examined in this context. The subject of terrorism in all its manifestations needs special attention by think tanks in the country. On the whole, the book examines the current political dynamics in India's neighbourhood quite comprehensively.

DEGREES WITHOUT FREEDOM: EDUCATION, MASCULINITIES AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN NORTH INDIA by **Craig Jeffrey, Patricia Jeffery and Roger Jeffery**. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008: xvi + 240.

Reviewed by KARIN KAPADIA in *Development and Change*. 40.4 July. 2009.

This is an important and extremely useful book. It is, however, rather a daunting read, being very densely written. This is perhaps due to its provenance: with three authors, it has a prosaic written-by-committee style. Despite this, it is certainly worth the reader's effort. Packed with references, its impressive bibliography will benefit a wide range of scholars. Yet, though a considerable achievement, this book is not without its problems. I will first consider its achievement, and then turn to the problems.

The book's central argument is that education in India is a 'contradictory resource'. Its focus is the unemployment of educated young men in rural western Uttar Pradesh. It argues that their continued unemployment disproves the claim that education can 'transform the prospects of the poor'. It is Sen's argument in *Development as Freedom* (1999) that the authors challenge, particularly his argument that education is a key tool of individual and social transformation through which people 'obtain a range of "substantive freedoms"', such as employment, political participation and dignity' (p. 3). Sen's contention is refuted thus: 'Rather than assuming that people from marginalized groups always benefit from schooling, we highlight the struggles faced by marginalized educated men to acquire work, political leverage and respect' (pp. 3-4). Dréze and Sen's (1995) 'insistence on education as 'social opportunity' (p. 3) is

also challenged. Separate chapters consider the strategies of young educated unemployed men from the following range of backgrounds: (1) rich landowning Jats; (2) better off Chamars; (3) Muslims, both poor and better-off; and (4) poor Chamars. Unsurprisingly, their strategies to secure employment turn out to be very strongly influenced by their particular caste, class and religious identities. (1) The rich Jats use their wealth and dominant caste position to cultivate social networks and provide large bribes and thus secure universally coveted government jobs. A public sector job is every educated young man's dream because such a job is permanent and well-paid: it affords high status. The private sector is very small in western Uttar Pradesh — its jobs are temporary and low-paid. Significantly, only the Jats succeed in getting government jobs in large numbers, almost no other social group succeeds in this. (2) The best that better off young Chamars can muster is to become political middlemen, intermediaries between the BSP and local Chamar communities, while continuing their search for public sector or, at least, better-paid, higher status jobs. However, due to their ex-untouchable caste status, young Chamar men lack social contacts in high places, as well as the ability to pay the very large bribes demanded for government posts. This is the case even with Scheduled Caste (SC) reserved jobs that have been allocated to them by the constitution. The law means nothing: corruption rules — SC jobs are illegally appropriated by wealthy upper caste men — or are (legally) monopolized by a tiny, well-off SC/Chamar urban elite. The rural Chamars lack the hard cash to make their presence felt. The only such jobs they are able to get are, eventually, only two very low-status cleaners' jobs. But even these are looked on as a great prize. Consequently, it is through their work as intermediaries between local government and their communities—as so-called 'new leaders' or 'new politicians' (*naye neta*)— that better-off young Chamar men are able to assert their hard-won distinction as educated, civilized men. (3) Young Muslim men have even less chance of public sector jobs than do Chamars, because, like Chamars, they lack wealth and influential social contacts and, further, suffer from a pervasive anti-Muslim bias (shared even by many Chamars). Unlike Chamars, most of them don't seek college degrees. Further, *madrasah* education fortunately provides Muslims with a genuine alternative to the shoddy, very low-quality schooling in rural Uttar Pradesh. *Madrasah* education can provide a route to respect and

recognition within the Muslim community, and is increasingly turned to by Muslim parents due to the spread of increasing Hindutva engineered, anti-Muslim prejudice. Most young rural Muslim men can draw on the extensive urban contacts of their community in order to enter urban artisanal work. They are also willing to take up self-employment in agriculture. But both these occupations are looked down on by young Jat and Chamar men. (4) Finally, poor Chamar men, among the educated unemployed, follow a fourth path. Lacking the means and the optimism of better off Chamars, they sink into despondence. They are almost continually employed in a succession of low-paid, low-status service sector jobs or, at worst, in casual, daily-wage agricultural labour. Yet they describe themselves as mere 'time pass' men, who are 'useless' and who have 'lost' their way in life, because they have been denied the white-collar jobs that their parents educated them for.

The authors therefore conclude that the schooling system in western Uttar Pradesh plays a central 'role . . . in reproducing inequality' (p. 210). They argue that efforts to improve 'the prospects of the rural poor in U.P . . . need to . . . recognize the wider social and political context within which educational initiatives take place' (ibid.). This is true: the understanding of *context* is of central importance to any analysis. But here, I suggest, the authors themselves have not been entirely successful. Contextual analysis demands detailed attention to the key elements of their argument. The book is based, we are told, on fourteen months' ethnographic research by three experienced scholars. To find analytical and empirical lacunae is, therefore, rather surprising. Firstly, for instance: the young male Jats are, we are told, on their way to becoming part of the 'new Indian middle class' (p. 80). But what exactly does a 'new middle class' identity actually mean in a rural context that is rife with knife-sharp caste and religion based discrimination? How is 'class' constituted in such a context—and what exactly constitutes the supposed 'urbanity' and 'modernity' that are imputed to the young Jats, who so clearly loathe their Chamar and Muslim neighbours? What precisely is 'modern' here?

Again, secondly: we learn that several of the Chamar 'new politicians' were hugely inspired by their Dalit teachers at school. Yet, frustratingly, we hear not a word about these teachers—who they were, where they came from, how they succeeded in spreading

their message of the importance of claiming and affirming Dalit rights — even though education and Dalits are at the heart of this book. The Chamar new politicians ‘in insisting upon education rather than caste as a measure of respect . . . criticized and sought to replace the abstract categories employed by the state to label them, such as “Scheduled Caste” . . . and stress[ed] their entitlement to participate in modern politics . . . ’ (p. 129; also see pp. 132–3). This is exciting and very important data — and possibly evidence of a truly radical Dalit politics. However, for no clear reason, the authors seek to dismiss this evidence of radical strategies and instead issue stern warnings against ‘optimistic readings’ (p. 137) that might view these efforts as significant markers of Dalit political mobilization. Instead they insist on advocating ‘political scepticism’ (p. 134) which, they argue, ‘most Chamars’ voice and point to the ‘continued subordination of Chamars within economic hierarchies’ (ibid.). While this may be true, it is also possible, I suggest, that this analysis may in fact be overly empiricist — giving primacy to the ‘visible’ and ‘objective’ economic subordination of Chamars —and insufficiently sensitive to Dalit subjectivities. Thirdly and finally: in relation to the Chamars the authors are perhaps guilty of the same fault that they assign to Bourdieu. They argue: ‘in failing to foreground the distinction between achieved forms of cultural capital, such as education, and ascribed forms, such as one’s caste background, Bourdieu *underestimates the iconic importance of education to marginalized populations*. Many poor Chamars recognized that they were out-competed by higher castes in the search of secure employment and local political influence, *but nevertheless valued education as a marker of civilization distinct from caste*. Bourdieu’s theoretical framework does not fully anticipate this possibility’ (p. 210; emphasis added).

The irony of this book is that the authors’ own framework does not fully allow for this possibility. Instead, in their conclusion, the authors once again insist that the claims that Sen (1999) and Dr’eze and Sen (1995) make for the *transformative* power of education in India are too large. I would like to suggest that — ironically — their own data belie this conclusion. Overall, their own evidence suggests that due to the ‘*iconic importance*’ of education to marginal populations in western Uttar Pradesh, it has a tremendous impact on the new self-confidence and *politicization*, and thus the life-

chances, of Chamars, *even in* contexts where their relative lack of income and power means that they remain in the category of the educated unemployed.

References

Dréze, J. and A. Sen (1995) *India: Development and Participation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sen, A. (1999) *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

GLOBALIZATION, LABOR MARKETS AND INEQUALITY IN INDIA by Dipak Mazumdar and Sandip Sarkar, London and New York: Routledge Taylor Francis, 2008: xx + 356

Reviewed by VARINDER JAIN, *Development and Change*. 40.4 July. 2009.

This book focuses on disentangling the crucial aspects related to Indian labour market dynamics, poverty and inequality in an era of globalization. It brings to the fore striking realities of poverty and inequality through rigorous analytical exercises. The first part of the book provides empirical evidence on poverty and inequality along with aspects of employment and earnings during the pre- and post-reform periods. An understanding of the implicit regional disparities in the Indian economy remains the central focus of the second part. The third part describes the patterns of employment and earnings in sectors like agriculture, manufacturing and the tertiary sector. The fourth part is devoted to the labour market institutions and the fifth is mainly conclusions. This work deserves appreciation on three counts. First, the focus of the study is highly relevant. It touches the controversial aspects of the impact of globalization on poverty, inequality and employment. By utilizing the relevant data sources, it not only provides rigorous analysis but also reveals the pervading realities of suffering experienced by the workforce in the Indian labour market. Moreover, the study's effort to provide a comparative account of findings made by other studies is noteworthy, not only because it has enriched the quality of this research work, but also from the perspective of the readers as they get the flavour of other earlier research in this field. Secondly, the approach of locating the regional disparities by utilizing NSS regions is useful, as it is a departure from the earlier approach of using the state. Thirdly, the study's focus on labour market institutions—not

only through exploring the status quo but also emphasizing the urgency of strengthening employment and social security for the unorganized sector workers—reveals the significance of institutions in mitigating the plight of the workforce in an era of globalization.

The authors have efficiently utilized available knowledge to explore the incidence of poverty and inequality in the Indian labour market. This said, there are some aspects of the book that could have been even better. Obviously, one has to start with the basic nature of the Indian labour market—its size, composition (reflecting gender, age, migration status, social class based occupational segregation etc.) and growth pattern so as to enable the readers (especially non-Indians) to get the feel of the Indian labour market. Following this, a discussion on relevant macroeconomic developments — as done by the authors — could have been enhanced by their own observations about the impact on the Indian workforce. This could have been followed by a discussion of another vital issue — that of vulnerability. Vulnerability is the pre-condition for a worker/household to experience poverty.

A thorough examination of employment and earnings in the major sectors of the Indian economy follows. The authors might have focused more on the macro-level trends and patterns in poverty and inequality. The analysis of poverty and insecurity from the regional perspective could have been more interesting if it had focused on the occupations/industries whose workforce experiences more poverty *vis-à-vis* other regions, and the implications of regional differences in labour market outcomes, so as to evolve a region-specific policy framework aimed at alleviating poverty. Greater emphasis on labour market institutions could have indicated that the prevalence of vulnerability, poverty and inequality might be due to the relative weakness of these institutions. An exploration would have been welcome of various ways to strengthen the existing institutions or develop a new institutional framework in line with the changing production structures and workforce patterns in an era of globalization. Moreover, the section on the human capital endowments of the Indian workforce, as the opportunity set generated by the globalization process, has been skewed by its distributional nature — it benefits only those possessing relevant skills. Under such a scenario, it would be helpful to not only know the levels of human capital in the Indian workforce, but to suggest ways for uplifting the human capital base. One may see these

suggestions as points of criticism; however, the study has involved quite painstaking work by the authors. Its analytical approach is sound and the inferences derived meaningful. The volume is very user-friendly and is a significant contribution to the existing literature on labour markets, poverty and inequality in India. It raises many thought-provoking points and is a good read for students thinking of pursuing careers in the field of labour economics. It is also of great use to policy practitioners, activists and the NGOs working to mitigate the plight of the working masses.

THE MYTH OF THE SHRINKING STATE: GLOBALISATION AND THE STATE IN INDIA by **Baldev Raj Nayar**; **Oxford University Press, 2009: 286.**

Reviewed by NINAN KOSHY (Globalisation and the State in India: Myth and Reality), *Economic and Political Weekly*. XLIV.37. September 12 (2009).

This stimulating study by Baldev Raj Nayar makes a close and systematic investigation of the impact of globalisation and economic liberalisation on the State in India. One of the less explored areas in the studies on globalisation is related to its political dimensions. The book is a valuable contribution to the topic. In his latest book the author uses empirical evidence to challenge and even refute the claim by critics that the forces unleashed by globalisation spell the erosion, and dismantlement of the economic and welfare role of the State as far as India is concerned.

Before and After

The analysis focuses on the change in the economic role of the State by examining the situation that existed before and after globalisation in respect to (i) the overall allocation and management of economy as reflected in economic planning or fiscal and monetary policy, and (ii) the welfare role of the State. It is argued that the building of the State in India as an economic leviathan proved dysfunctional for economic growth, economic stability and indeed economic autonomy. A strong case is thus made for shedding (at least in part) its functions. The author carefully examines the globalisation thesis on the State, especially the position that "it follows from the very

notion of globalisation that the most direct political consequence is the dismantling of the economic role of the State". He finds that the position of the critics against globalisation receives strong support in India particularly among Marxist scholars. In fact, the issue of possible adverse impact of globalisation on the State was already brought up in the 1990s by many Third World scholars. One of the first to draw attention to it was Rajni Kothari ("Under Globalisation: Will the Nation State Hold?", EPW, 1995, Vol. XXX, No. 26). Nayar's book attempts to examine whether the hypothesis on the consequences for the State from globalisation, particularly about the shrinking or the dismantlement of the State is sustainable. Recognising that liberalisation has resulted in the rapid expansion of the private sector, the author raises the question whether such expansion means a diminution of the economic and welfare role of the State in India. With the help of convincing statistical data, the author states that under economic reforms, state expenditure on education, health and in general the social sector has increased and advanced rather than decreased and declined. With both education and health, however, the study underlines the complete failure of the government with regard to its delivery mechanism. He concludes that "the thesis on the retrenchment of the economic and welfare role of the State is shown when confronted with hard data to be of little merit". On the basis of empirical evidence, the author recognises a fundamental continuity in the role of the State. Far from being dismantled or shrunk, it has continued to expand in absolute terms. Economic liberalisation can be said to have led to a further strengthening of the State and, in fact, it has expanded. He admits however that despite the continued expansion of the economic and welfare roles, there are legitimate questions about the adequacy of the State's efforts in relation to investment in the production of public goods, such as economic infrastructure. While the claim that the State has strengthened and expanded under globalisation may be sustained, though the nature of such strengthening and expansion is subject to debate, the argument that "the expansion consequent to economic liberalisation cannot be said to have resulted in large groups being adversely affected by liberalisation" is open to serious questioning. He further says, "Those who have not gained or gained as much are laggards rather than losers". The study does not provide any evidence for these observations. Large groups like dalits and adivasis are adversely affected by liberalisation as many studies

have shown. There is little evidence to show that the vast majority of Indians have gained from globalisation, notwithstanding recent claims about inclusiveness which seem to have come as an afterthought rather than being integral to economic policy. Again who are these laggards? Is it not more correct to describe them as “the pushed outs” or marginalised? In many respects globalisation and marginalisation are two sides of the same coin.

The Strong State

Several issues are raised by this important study. In fact the title *The Myth of the Shrinking State* itself raises questions. What the World Bank and its high priests advocated in the 1990s was *shrinking the State*. They were vocal about the benefits of shrinking the State both for transition economies and developing countries. But by the late 1990s the World Bank changed its views. There was little talk of “shrinking”. A growing emphasis was given in the structural adjustment literature to a strong State – strong in terms of capacity to implement changes, strong in terms of channelling and protecting private investment, strong in law and order, but not strong on participatory democracy or in building the country’s economic, social and cultural capacity. Building state capacity became a major thrust of the World Bank centering on public management, privatisation and market-based regulatory capacity. The State’s unique strengths were identified as its power to tax, to protect, to punish and to require participation. It was not a shrinking State that was needed. Part of the answer to this problem is given by the author himself when he says that “contrary to the prediction of the critics, then it may well be that the State faced with globalisation is not so much being retrenched as it is being reenergised, recalibrated or redefined”; except that it was not contrary to the “prediction of the critics”. In fact, the critics had predicted that the State would be redefined and transformed under globalisation. It would continue to intervene but the nature of intervention would change. It would be an intervention in favour of capital and market, not labour and the people. The concern is that this redefinition, transformation and change in the nature of intervention have been largely at the behest of external forces, rather than as the choice of the State. The strength of the study lies in the important conclusions it arrives at with regard to public goods and services. First, the supply of public goods is an

important function of the State. In India the investments have to be further increased in proportion to the GDP and effective delivery systems have to be ensured. Second, the supply of public goods is important for national solidarity. National cohesion is crucially dependent on the welfare of the population. Third, the supply of public goods at some minimal level is necessary insurance against risk that accompanies globalisation. Fourth, and importantly, an active role in the social sectors is mandated since India's record so far is appallingly poor in this area. The author points out India's low ranking on the human development index (HDI) – an index of 0.619 at 128 among 179 nations according to *The Human Development Report 2007-08*, in contrast to its impressive record on economic growth. This opens up another level of enquiry. Under economic reforms in India if there is indeed an expansion in the social sector, has there not been a change in the State's perception of some of its essential functions? Even if the State has increased its expenditure on education, it can be shown that its policy on education has undergone changes which are not oriented to social justice. Increasingly, it is implementing educational policies under the influence of globalisation. The philosophical goals of education have been replaced by the functional goals of meeting the demands of the market. Does this not indicate a change in the nature of the State with regard to one of its core functions? This applies equally well to health. In fact, the study confirms the general picture of poor performance in the area of health. The question is the extent to which privatisation in education and health has affected the public services for the common people in these areas. The book is a very important contribution to the debate on the political dimensions of globalisation with particular reference to the State's economic role. It challenges many of the assumptions that generally prevail in discussions on economic policies of the Indian State under reform. It also raises several issues which need further study and scrutiny. It is a valuable guide to students, scholars, administrators and policymakers. The shrinking state may be a myth but the transforming State is a reality in India under globalisation. Such transformation in general unfortunately does not serve the interests of the majority of the people.

POLITICS OF INCLUSION: CASTES, MINORITIES AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION by Zoya Hasan. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2009.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: FIELD STUDIES FROM RURAL INDIA edited by B.S. Baviskar and George Mathew. Sage, New Delhi, 2009.

Reviewed by AJAY K MEHRA in Seminar 602. October 2009.

WHEN a country as diverse as India embarks on its democratic journey, it is time, as Jawaharlal Nehru said, to 'redeem our pledge', '(t)o bring freedom and opportunity to the common man.' However, despite the emphasis that 'the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now',¹ structures of the past are as difficult to dismantle as it is to build a new architectural edifice for the future. The deeply ingrained exclusionary social structures in India were one such set of arrangements that were expected to come in the way of equality, justice and 'dignity of individual' that was politically and constitutionally promised in free India, including representative democracy. This was well anticipated by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who minced no words in stating this during his thoughtful penultimate day speech at the Constituent Assembly on 25 November 1949: 'On the 26th of January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality.... We must remove this contradiction at the earliest moment, or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy which this Assembly has so laboriously built up.'²

Jawaharlal Nehru too was aware of this. However, his distaste for casteism, communalism and religious bigotry was phenomenal. No wonder, despite his concerns for pockets of impoverishment and backwardness, he was not inclined to 'reservation' as an instrument of affirmative action. However, he agreed to protective discrimination for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with 15 per cent and 7.5 per cent job quota respectively, as he conceded historical discrimination and oppressive exploitation they suffered and the consequent structural backwardness that engulfed their communities. Yet, even when he conceded a commission to consider backwardness based protective discrimination, he did not allow the

use of caste; the commission chaired by Kaka Kalelkar was named the Backward Classes Commission. And, since he was not in favour of job reservations, he let its report gather dust, rather than act.

The second report of the Backward Classes Commission headed by B.P. Mandal revived the political debate on the extension of the politics of inclusion in the late 1970s and the 1980s, culminating in its acceptance in 1990 and its further extension in 2006. The Prime Minister's High Level Committee on Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community in India headed by Justice (retired) Rajinder Sachar, gave the debate a new dimension. The findings of two recent books under discussion here, which present a useful and topical context to discourse inclusion and exclusion in panoramic as well as contemporary political, constitutional procession frames of reference, give us an understanding of the meta-politics as well as micro-politics of inclusion and exclusion. India's politics of the past two decades has brought the issues of inclusion and exclusion to the foreground in a variety of ways. The rise of the politics of Hindutva championed by the BJP, and its majoritarian focus, has questioned extant minority welfare policies, which have been weak in any case. Unfortunately, the politics of the minorities has been unable to cope with it. On the other hand, the rise of Dalit and OBC politics independent of the prevailing national and regional party systems, spearheaded by 'original' parties such as the BSP and leaders who were never part of the mainstream parties, has added hitherto unseen flamboyant hues to the inclusion discourse. The two studies acquire an added significance in the context of the 15th general elections, which is certain to make the debate and politics even more intense. The brief discussion here, more than review the books, attempts to underscore the issues that emerge from them and stress the need for further social science investigation that looks for problem solving and policy options.

Zoya Hasan's meticulously documented, neatly chronicled and dispassionately analyzed work critiques the emergence of the politics, debate and mindsets on inclusion of the communities that were either excluded (e.g., Dalits and Adivasis), or were apprehensive of exclusion (such as minorities, particularly Muslims) in an emerging democratic India. The framework of preferential inclusion for the former emerging during the British rule had acceptance given historic wrongs; that of the latter was caught into

unacceptability of the framework blamed for Partition. While affirmative action for the Dalits and the Adivasis was acceptable across the political spectrum, it was not acceptable, as it is not even now, for the minorities. The two sets of communities also had different notions of self as well as what they expected from the post-independence Indian state. 'For minorities, knowledge and concern are invariably centred on issues of security and identity, and not of equity and justice, whilst the problems of lower castes are squarely located in the context of justice, equality, and democracy' (p. 9).

Hasan's analysis of policies, programmes and politics brings out that these differing conceptions and perceptions of inclusion amongst the leaders and the parties have come in the way effective realization of the goals of economic upliftment of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes too. The biases have indeed melted a bit in a cosmopolitan milieu, but they run deep in the country, a fact that the Baviskar-Mathew collection brings out rather starkly (we shall come to the details in a while), and have come in the way of social, political and economic amelioration of deep-rooted exclusionary prejudices and frameworks. That the Muslims need state action ensuring justice, equality, and democracy and their politics needs to go beyond identity and security came out unambiguously only after the Sachar Commission Report. Indeed, the discourse on Mandal I and Mandal II too had indicated that backwardness amongst the Muslims was endemic. Hyphenated identities such as Dalit-Christians, Adivasi-Christians and Dalit-Muslims continue to remain hot potatoes for both the government and parties. The rise of the politics of Hindutva has further queered the pitch in rationalizing politics and policies in treating their problems. However, the discourse on affirmative action, which has been equated only with reservations in jobs, and now in educational opportunities, has become complex. What kind of preferential policies, or affirmative action, beyond job reservation could be conceived to deal with the extreme economic and social backwardness persisting amongst the Muslims and other minorities? Does the representational deficit of these communities, who have been unable to compete in the employment arena with better-off communities, leads to prejudice and dereliction of duty visible amongst the police and general administration, as witnessed during social, communitarian and collective violence across the country? That they should have representation and a fair share of the national

cake is unexceptionable, but whether that would by itself mitigate violence and elicit a better response from the public services dealing with such conflictual situation is a matter deserving debate. The merit of Zoya Hasan's exceptional effort is an unprejudiced and dispassionate analysis of such issues. Without placing majoritarianism against minorityism, the clarion call of the Hindutva forces for two decades, she makes a case for rational choice by the government, parties, leaders and civil society in the matter. The exclusionary mindset must give way to rational inclusionary policies is the unmistakable message that the study underlines.

As one puts aside Hasan's study and leafs through the Baviskar-Mathew collection emerging out of field studies on exclusion and inclusion in the realm of Panchayati Raj post-73rd Amendment in twelve states, the fifteen essays (including Introduction) in the volume indicate that the minorities – Muslims, Christians and others – are not part of this story. This not only indicates the representational shortfall that Hasan has succinctly pointed out, but also the democratic deficit at the grassroots institutions. It must also be underscored at the outset that political parties are the first forum and institutional framework that must operationalize and practice inclusion in its most comprehensive manifestation; an act that does not need any legal instrument. However, the parties that should be the first forums have based themselves on the prevailing structures of exclusion and have even violated any statutory instrument that they themselves created for garnering electoral support. The tussle over gender representation in the Parliament and legislatures gives ample proof of this. The political parties, which have a constitutionally ordained presence in the local arena since the 73rd and 74th Amendment, appear to blink over, if not approve of, the continuing deficits. In many cases they use it for gaining a stranglehold over the panchayat bodies.

The structures of dominance existing in rural India, lorded over by dominant families in different degrees in different parts of the country, have been strengthened through party politics. They had traditionally captured the emerging democratic spaces since independence. Now that they have been compelled to cede the vantage points in local institutions to women, Dalits and Adivasis, they have found new ways to keep their dominance intact. Indeed, what is true in the twelve states discussed in the Baviskar-Mathew volume is equally valid for other states not discussed within these

covers. Needless to say those experiences from the other sixteen states would have added value to the book. The Left politics in West Bengal, for example, as Manasendu Kundu's study points out, has created a partisan inclusion; the party's control is absolute. The issue of party identity comes up in other case studies too and indicates that genuine democratization is difficult unless parties are themselves democratized. Without substantive changes in the party recruitment at the grassroots and the creation of an open platform for the blossoming of the leadership, the process will experience a bumpy path.

The stories of 'panchpati' in panchayat after panchayat since the inception of the 73rd Amendment are legendary. There have been hints in certain cases that women have managed to emerge out of that shadow. The Baviskar-Mathew volume appears to argue otherwise. However, the methodology used does not appear nuanced enough to capture subtle changes that may be occurring. Even a minor aberration from this model should have been recorded.

Ensuring representation, office and political rights statutorily to Dalits and Adivasis has increased their visibility. However, they not only face structures of dominance forcing them to be proxies, they still suffer the humiliation of untouchability. At best, it is their distanced presence that is accepted in the panchayats now. Obviously, over six decades since independence and the nearly six decades since the Republic, India has still to overcome this scourge. The constitutional requirements, affirmative action legislations and the democratic discourse on inclusion have given them space, but they have yet to travel a good distance. Unfortunately, the Dalit leaders too have displayed a tendency to turn proxies. B.B. Mohanty's analysis of Orissa, for example, points out that 'the inclusion of members of the SCs and women in panchayats has only helped the rich to consolidate their economic position' (p. 66). It also brings out that the process of political inclusion has given them participation, not empowerment.

The two studies highlight the difficulties inherent in Operationalising inclusive policies in India. The discourse on inclusion in India has several inherent complexities. The lines of identities, segregation, rights and so on intersect each other at several points, making policy options complex. Taking the call for minority-inclusive policy as an example, we would do well to recall the discourse during the terror acts in Jaipur, Delhi and Mumbai,

particularly the Batla house encounter in Jamia Nagar in Delhi. The incidents brought new focus on Azamgarh, related earlier with the name of poet Kaifi Azmi, as a terror hub. In place of an informed debate, it became part of a blame game from both sides. Similarly, as succinctly brought out by Hasan, the hyphenated exclusionary identities become victims of policy neglect.

The discourse on exclusion and inclusion in India in the past few years has been enriched by the Sachar Committee Report. The merit of the committee's report in suggesting inclusionary frameworks beyond caste and religion by framing a diversity index and creating an Equal Opportunity Commission has been lost in the unwarranted political heat. Consequently, the Madhava Menon Expert Group's recommendations on Equal Opportunity Commission and the Amitabh Kundu Expert Group's recommendations on a diversity index, and their operationalization and institutionalization have neither been discussed politically, nor academically. We need to move beyond the structured barriers in our journey towards inclusion. The two books make a valuable academic contribution in that direction.

1. From Nehru's 'Tryst with Destiny' speech.
2. Constituent Assembly Debates, New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1989, vol. IX, p. 979.

AMBEDKAR IN RETROSPECT: ESSAYS ON ECONOMICS, POLITICS AND SOCIETY edited by Sukhdeo Thorat and Aryama, Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2007.

Reviewed by ANIRUDH DESHPANDE in *Seminar* 602 October 2009.

It is the considered view of this reviewer that Dr. Ambedkar and Pandit Nehru were perhaps two most *complete* intellectuals produced by the contingencies of Indian politics during the colonial decades of Indian history in the previous century. By *complete*, I mean the philosophical ability to develop a worldview compatible with the exigencies of modernity. This description automatically excludes romantics like Gandhi. Both the present Indian Constitution and the democratic state, with flaws which cannot really be attributed to either Nehru or Ambedkar, bear the unmistakable stamp of these

two individuals. Both believed in the ability of the democratic system to eventually deliver the goods of modernization to the masses and both advocated, with important differences in their views of course, a gradualist path towards social emancipation and political empowerment.

In their commitment to education, science and technology *and* affirmative action both Nehru and Ambedkar thought along similar lines. Both were secular and gender sensitive. However, as this well-conceived volume proves, Ambedkar's views emanated from a position of social criticism which emerged *distinctly from below*. In his criticism of caste society from the viewpoint of the depressed classes, Ambedkar broke the intellectual limits attained by a Fabian like Nehru. Not only was he more accomplished than Nehru as an academic, being a Dalit he faced the kind of discrimination which Nehru never did. This discrimination, representative as it was of a universal social condition in caste Hindu society, infused a typical *subaltern* rigour into his writings, marked for their intellectual force and impatience with the caste system.

The contributors to the volume under review are distinguished scholars of Dalit studies and their reading of Ambedkar from a variety of perspectives is commended to both academics and lay readers. The volume also provides an opportunity to the readers to go through interesting extracts chosen by the contributors from the copious works on numerous subjects written by Ambedkar.

The title and contents of the book establish Ambedkar not only as the foremost Dalit intellectual produced in India but also as an economist, educationist and political theorist *par excellence*. The admirable introduction to the volume has been written by Sukhadeo Thorat who convincingly argues that Ambedkar remains critically relevant to our times. This conclusion is arrived at after a summary of Ambedkar's role in India's anti-colonial freedom struggle which highlights the differences between Ambedkar's politics and the main concerns of the Gandhi-Nehru led Congress movement. Of particular significance here are the differences in the reading of caste offered by Gandhi and Ambedkar. It is important to note that these differences have maintained their salience even several decades after Ambedkar's death. The introduction comprises a brilliant essay on the 'democratic socialism' advocated by Ambedkar as well as his differences with the Communists, with whom he developed close contacts during the 1930s.

Part One of the volume, inspired perhaps by the fact that Ambedkar began his career as a professional economist, contains essays by Thorat, G. Nancharaiah, Aryama, and Bhalchandra Mungekar on Ambedkar's views on economic development and planning. These essays highlight several dimensions of Ambedkar's thoughts on political economy and on economic subjects such as planning, exchange rate, trade balance, economic distribution, economic exploitation and inequalities, labour policy and even policies on water and power.

Social justice and a 'socialistic' pattern of economic development in which a democratic state would actively work against economic exploitation of the depressed working classes were the cornerstones of Ambedkar's economic thought. The quasi Keynesian flavour of Ambedkar's economic thinking is explained by the period of global economic crisis within which he formulated most of his welfare economics. The essays in this section remind us of the powerful role Ambedkar played in fashioning India's resilient mixed economy – an attribute which first developed India during the decades following independence and later saved it from a complete melt-down during the global recession of 2008-09.

The book presents a thematic selection of essays on Ambedkar's thought and its current relevance. Part Two has three essays on his views on 'Democratic Socialism', rights, and overall conception of political power. Part Three comprises four well written articles on caste, nationalism, reorganization of states in India and even views on panchayati raj. Part Four has two excellent contributions by Ghanshyam Shah and Gail Omvedt on Ambedkar's theory of caste and untouchability. It is also pertinent to observe that Ambedkar's understanding of caste was radically different from that of leaders like Gandhi who ultimately favoured a reconciliation of castes. This difference was predicated upon Ambedkar's revolutionary understanding of Indian history. This important aspect of his philosophy of praxis is touched upon in Part five which contains three erudite essays on his perspective on Indian history by Y.S. Alone, G. Hargopal and Sukumar Muralidharan and Kancha Ilaiah. Finally, and to complete the sweep of ideas, Part Six deals with Ambedkar's ideas on the question of women.

In sum, this volume of well-researched essays re-establishes the political centrality of Ambedkar's thought in contemporary India. As long as castes discrimination, untouchability, unemployment,

general economic insecurity and patriarchy continue to blight India's transition to a truly humane society, Ambedkar will remain relevant. If a just society is indeed created in future, his thoughts will continue to sound a warning against a possible return to the past. The volume reinforces the fact that democracy must be social in order to be politically effective.

JINNAH: INDIA-PARTITION-INDEPENDENCE by Jaswant Singh. Rupa and Co., Delhi, 2009.

Reviewed by HAMEED HAROON in Seminar 603. November. 2009.

WHEN, after five years of research on Pakistan's founding father, political-practitioner-cum-author, Jaswant Singh, unveiled the English and Hindi editions of his imposing new work, *Jinnah: India-Partition-Independence* – political pundits in Delhi and Islamabad were caught unaware. Few of those present at the book launch ceremony at the auditorium of the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library could have envisaged that the cycle of chain reactions triggered off by this occasion would result in something more than the proverbial midsummer storm in a South Asian tea cup.

Hours before the book launch, party mandarins were ensconced behind closed doors at the BJP headquarters, even as their counterparts across the divide in the Congress Party had already begun attacking the content of the volume – long before they could possibly have read through the 600-odd pages of the book. With amateur historiography at full flood within the hierarchy of the BJP, and with the shock expulsion of one of its venerated founders from the ranks, the party machine soon drew first blood. It was left for Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi from the BJP western stronghold to deliver the executioner's blow with missionary zeal and impose a ban on the sale of the book.

Looked at in retrospect, the BJP had acted in indecent haste, trampling over even the minimal vestiges of freedom of expression the party should have been committed to in a functioning democracy. The entrenched hierarchy unceremoniously ejected Jaswant Singh from the party without providing him even a formalistic opportunity to answer the charges. In nearby Pakistan too, an intense debate started within hours of the release of the book.

Somewhat predictably, a lunatic fringe there triumphantly paraded their trump question to a bewildered public: Had the Hindu right-wing unveiled a new conspiracy to puncture the wobbly chassis of a post Sharam-al-Shiekh *entente cordiale*? That Jaswant Singh was a victim and not the perpetrator of the current controversy was an irony totally lost upon Pakistan's right-wing, as a new re-examination of the alternative courses open to Jinnah in 1947 fuelled a new-found interest within the country he founded.

There has been no shortage of historians in the 20th century to plead the cause of Pakistan's founder. Hector Bolitho, Hormasji Seervai, Stanley Wolpert and Ayesha Jalal are prominent, along with a host of lesser known chroniclers. Over the last 60 years, Jinnah's life has been painstakingly recreated in Pakistan (with close to the kind of reverence that Soviet historians were wont to reserve for the founder of their republic, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin). At the formidable Archives for the Freedom Movement in Islamabad, the task of collating several thousand Jinnah papers fell until recently to the lot of the late Dr. Zawar Zaidi (formerly of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London), who had only recently released the 14th (and by no means the final) volume in an ongoing project for the Jinnah Papers. This collection takes as its starting point of reference the periodisation of Jinnah's five decade long career as earlier laid out by the dean of Jinnah historians in Pakistan, Professor Sharif-al-Mujahid. It is this logical periodisation which Jaswant Singh too appears have followed closely in his political biography, as he traces the early years of Jinnah's career in the Indian National Congress.

Jinnah emerged as a rising star on the stage of Indian nationalist politics, as Sarojini Naidu had then described in her oft-quoted phrase, 'India's leading ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity.' His subsequent and somewhat rapid retreat from the centre-stage of nationalist politics at the height of a charismatic political career, and a decade spent in the political wilderness thereafter, are reflective of the failure of his attempts to forge a consensus between the leaderships of both the Indian National Congress and the All India Muslim League on a mutually acceptable package of constitutional safeguards for Muslims. These, if successful, may have laid the foundations for a future undivided India.

As the unchallenged heir to the liberal and anti-imperialist traditions of the Congress left-group that had dominated nationalist

politics from the third quarter of the 19th century to the eve of the First World War, Jinnah was the standard-bearer of a revered political dispensation that included nationalist giants such as Dadabhai Naoroji, Pherozeshah Mehta and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. But the standard bearer was to grow increasingly disenchanted with the collapse of the euphoria that followed the Lucknow Pact of 1916 between the Congress and the Muslim League. Nor was Jinnah's eclectic secularism enthused when Gandhi returned from South Africa to a hero's welcome in India and unleashed a qualitatively new kind of momentum in mass movement politics. Jinnah firmly believed that this movement was rooted in a quasi spiritualism endowed richly with rhetoric and metaphor (dare one add substance) of an unacceptable Hindu revivalism.

Equally distasteful to Naoroji's heir was the preoccupation at this point in time of the nationalist segment of the Muslim polity (with Gandhi's unbridled blessing) to actively engage with a Khilafat based pan-Islamism. All this led Jinnah to scorn this new-found cause as a wholly inappropriate diversion from the task of squarely confronting the central and often conflicting dilemmas that challenged the goal of a united nationalist platform. While Gandhian charisma and a nascent, factionalised Muslim bourgeoisie, coalesced to promote a new climate of pan-Islamic folly, Jinnah vigorously resisted any attempt to demonstrate a meaningful solidarity with his co-religionists in the Khilafat movement, whom he construed as having embarked upon a hopeless odyssey to reignite the dying embers of a doomed Caliphate. Jaswant negotiates the hazardous contours of this terrain with an eye for meticulous historical detail, treating the subject with a refined candour virtually alien to the communalist historian in the region.

The 1920s were years in the political wilderness for Jinnah. At the end of this decade, sunk in a period of deep personal mourning following the demise of his estranged but beloved wife, Ruttie Petit Jinnah, he recognised the near collapse of his much acclaimed ambassadorship of Hindu-Muslim unity. As Jaswant Singh compellingly demonstrates, viewed in retrospect the 1928 Nehru Report was the final nail in the coffin of an increasingly sterile Lucknow Pact that Jinnah had so triumphantly and skilfully engineered to bring about, and in which, he believed, lay the foundations of a durable concordat between Hindus and Muslims on a Congress-based unity platform.

The lukewarm support lent by the Muslim League leadership to Jinnah's aborted unity platform during this period in the wilderness further eliminated any prospects for his much vaunted ambassadorship. By the end of this period, Hindu-Muslim unity appeared to be an unreachable dream atop a very distant horizon. Put simply, Jinnah now needed to evolve a new strategy to combat a new situation. This strategy, as it emerged over the next few years, focused on a new role for Jinnah to achieve the elusive goal of unity by pursuing an entirely different route. The new role was that of a self-appointed 'sole spokesman' for the Muslims of undivided India, a spokesman who would mobilize India's Muslims in lending their unqualified support for the introduction of a viable package of constitutional safeguards against the future possibilities inherent in a 'brute' majority rule by Hindus (class analysts would substitute 'Hindus' with an 'Hindu elite').

Jinnah sincerely believed that facilitating a measured transition to a joint Congress-League stewardship of India by adopting this new route was the only way forward, although he gradually came to realize that it was a path strewn with many inherent dangers. As Jaswant points out, a major pitfall lay in the role of India's British rulers in Delhi and Westminster who, in the drift towards 1947, missed no trick in keeping India's Hindus and Muslims apart. In this alone lay the guarantee for a continued rule by the British in India, though as the celebrated Pakistani-born historian Ayesha Jalal points out, there was initially very little evidence that this new strategy was at all working.

Prior to the 1940 Resolution there appeared scant evidence to demonstrate that Jinnah had advanced significantly towards the achievement of his goals by the adoption of the sole spokesman ship strategy. A cursory reference to the composition of Muslim members in the provincial legislatures in India's Muslim-majority provinces in 1940 would indicate that Jinnah's revitalised League was a relatively minor political force, and its leader a very limited spokesman indeed for India's Muslims, far less being the only one. Contrast this with a fully developed situation in 1945, by when Jinnah had single-handedly managed to virtually demolish the claim of the Indian National Congress to speak for any Muslim of great import (except perhaps for a few remaining stalwarts in the Congress such as Maulana Azad, and a sprinkling of Muslim groups sympathetic to the Congress such as Ghaffar Khan's Red Shirt movement in the NWFP).

Jaswant analyses the relevance of the sole spokesman factor on the eve of Partition and concludes that the bagging of an incredible 99 percent of the urban Muslim vote in the United Provinces when viewed alongside the significant progress in cornering the Muslim vote in the Muslim majority provinces (Punjab was to come his way a year later in 1946), together indicates the success with which Jinnah had mobilized the Muslims of India on a unified platform. It is a tribute to Jinnah's political sagacity that he was able to galvanize India's Muslims into a contending force in order to achieve the much wanted safeguards – and in doing so he had also sustained, with remarkable virtuosity, the momentum in the League's drive to demonstrate a significantly bolstered negotiating strength for his position.

Looked at this way, it makes some sense for contemporary observers to view Jinnah's escalating demand for Pakistan as a historic negotiating tactic that promised the eventual creation of a grouping of Muslim majority states on India's eastern and western flanks as a self evident, if not ill-thought out, fallback position for the Muslims to bend the intransigence of the Congress leadership on the issue of a weighted Muslim representation. But the necessity of yielding to a reasonable power-sharing formula with inbuilt constitutional safeguards for India's large minority of Muslims was to develop into a series of political demands that were deemed unacceptable by the Congress leadership in any form – Pakistan or no Pakistan – more so if this leadership viewed such demands as merely 'a historic negotiating tactic.' Once Jinnah announced his agreement to an Indian federation in 1946, the subsequent rejection of the Cabinet Mission Plan ironically left him with no recourse except the fallback position. But we seem to be moving ahead of the Jaswant Singh narrative. It seems sufficient at this point of the argument to state that the sole spokesman ship of Jinnah finally resulted in a strategy that was to pave the way for the eventual dismemberment of India.

This dissection and elaborate reflection on Jinnah's failed quest for unity stands at the heart of Jaswant Singh's volume. Describing with minute precision the intricate criss-crossing of the conflicting factors that constrained the pronouncements and policy twists of the Congress and League leaderships, the political animal within Jaswant Singh negotiates with consummate skill and potent historical reflection the hazards of the pre-Partition terrain in Indian

politics and the many micro-tensions that confronted this period of turmoil. If at all Jaswant has any preconceived ideas on this matter, they arise primarily from a determined desire to reject the grossly oversimplified, black and white analytical parameters that have to date dominated the tradition of national historiography on both sides of the divide.

Jaswant seeks to replace this oversimplification with a more painfully reasoned analysis, one presented in many hued shades of various grey. Were his critics in Congress and the BJP to point out that Jaswant hardly accords the same importance or depth in his elaborate historical construct to analyse the motivation and constraints of senior Congress leadership, his honest reply would be that this volume essentially focuses on the role of Jinnah and not primarily on that of the other actors in this momentous event. Their actions bear analyses only to the extent that Gandhi, Nehru and Patel were able to elicit either a modification or a new turn in Jinnah's political strategy or thinking. What is perhaps closer to the truth is that Jaswant Singh believes that a partition could in the final analysis have been avoided if only both the Congress and League leadership had adopted swift counterstrategies for damage containment in that a continuing unity for India could have helped avoid the consequential tragedy that India's peoples, especially its Muslims, would have to face.

If Ayesha Jalal is the pioneer of the powerful analytical concepts that had earlier defined Jinnah's role as the sole spokesman, then Jaswant Singh's work should be rightfully considered as the leading mechanism for communicating the consequences of this policy to larger South Asian audiences. All this makes more sense when you add to Jaswant Singh's two volumes in English and Hindi, the upcoming Bengali edition of the book to be released in October and an Urdu edition which is scheduled for release in Pakistan in December. The many-pronged contours of Jaswant's multilingual crusade to communicate a better understanding of the role of Pakistan's founder – warts and all – in the partition of South Asia thus emerge with greater clarity.

In order to achieve this end, Jaswant attempts to remove many of the popular misconceptions as also reinforce many of the self-evident half truths of this era, thus creating grounds for possible and gradual reconciliation of two heavily polarized and contending schools of nationalist historiography in South Asia. But his singular

attempt to tread a middle of the road path with balance and moderation has managed to enrage both the Congress and the BJP in India, and induce the polemic of a new right-wing revisionist reaction that is likely to come up in the near political future in Pakistan. Jaswant's desire to effect a gradual healing of the wounds inflicted by the partition of the subcontinent seems to have found few initial takers in the established hierarchy in India and is similarly likely to be subjected to a revisionist posture by members of Pakistan's academic community in the near future. Where the final balance will rest in this matter is anybody's guess.

While describing the events that cover the last 12 months towards Partition, Jaswant scrutinizes with remarkable lucidity the anatomy of the final break – the somewhat inexplicable torpedoing of the fateful Cabinet Mission Plan of 1946 which Gandhi, Nehru and Jinnah had all initially given their assent to. It is this plan for an Indian Federation that Nehru subsequently rose to reject in a press interview soon afterwards. I am in agreement with Nehru biographer M.J. Akbar's contention, made at Jaswant's book launch that Nehru could not possibly have acted alone. Neither Gandhi nor Patel, in fact no Congress leader of any stature, contradicted the contents of Jawaharlal's subsequent interview when the storm arose, the inference being that the decision to torpedo the plan arose through a collective consensus of the senior Congress leadership.

If the Cabinet Mission Plan seemed unworkable and unacceptable to the Congress leadership, so too should have been the eventual dismemberment of a united India. When Jinnah called for direct action in a conflict-ridden Kolkata, where violence had already been sporadically breaking out, it marked the final death-knell to the realization of his dream of constructing a single united platform to govern India's Muslims and Hindus. The rejection of the Cabinet Mission Plan marks the emergence of an uncontrollable and irreversible drift towards the partition of India one year later. Much more thought needs to be expended on the final turning point on which hinges the vilification of the Congress and the League leaderships by subsequent communal historiography. The opportunity had been irretrievably lost and the consequences for the future of South Asia had exacted a heavy toll in the march of our subsequent contemporary history.

Jaswant Singh marks the passing away of prospects for unity in the last century with an inherent sadness. In his historic 11th August

1947 address in Karachi before the Constituent Assembly of the new state of Pakistan, Jinnah appears forceful but sad, as he echoes memories of that lost dream: 'You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques...Any religion or caste or creed has nothing to do with the business of the State.'

But the business of the state had indeed changed in Pakistan. The Provincial Information Officer of the Government of Pakistan neatly snipped off those very portions of Jinnah's unequivocal statement on the freedom of worship and on religious tolerance that were so crucial to Jinnah's essential vision; a vision that had been stoked and nurtured in the crucible of a fire lit by Naoroji, Mehta and Gokhale.

What Jinnah said in the 11 August 1947 address was dear to his heart. The battle for constitutional safeguards for the Muslims was now over by the creation of a Muslim majority state of Pakistan. Religion was not to be a primary focus or even a matter concerning the business of the state. In the new Pakistan, each citizen, whether Muslim, Hindu or Christian, was to be given his due place. But the clock of history is not so easily reversed. The new arrangement of Jinnah's ideology, rephrased at first timidly by the Provincial Information Officer, would be subject to heavy rewriting and indeed eventual reversal, to bring it more closely in line with the nascent ideology of Pakistan's newly emerging coalition of interests – opportunistic politicians, religious obscurantist and a resilient warrior class; a rainbow coalition that would gradually usurp Jinnah's newly founded state and effect its eventual dismemberment a mere 24 years later.

Jinnah's speech of 11 August 1947 was thus the last hurrah for India's leading ambassador of unity. Barely a year later he would be dead and the power-brokers who took over the management of his legacy would succeed in dismantling almost every vestige of his founding ideology. That the leadership of the Indian National Congress in their intransigence – however willing or unwilling – became supreme collaborators in the realization of this historical irony makes the ensuing tragedy of Partition even more poignant, if one were to attempt to paraphrase Jaswant's reasoning somewhat freely.

In his political biography Jaswant Singh brilliantly dissects Jinnah's central dilemma and produces over 525 pages of carefully reasoned commentary and reflections – all this occasionally

punctuated by a niggling pedestrian preoccupation with a sprinkling of the more outlandish do's and don'ts from both sides of the historical divide in South Asia. But this happens only very occasionally. In large measure, the candour and honesty of the self-appointed chronicler shines through as Jaswant prepares to unveil his careful, moderate construct of Jinnah's role in the making of twentieth century South Asian history. In doing this, Jaswant neither castigates Patel, as claimed by the newly emergent mandarins of popular BJP historiography, nor does he stoop to vilify Gandhi or Nehru, as declaimed by some of the wilder Congress enthusiasts. There is indeed no evidence for the allegation that Jaswant holds Patel responsible for the eventual destruction of the autonomy of the princely states, which his popular critics allege Jaswant was sympathetic to – in a spin of the ever-present allegation of caste politics, a popular weapon to damn opponents in India's political arena.

To be fair, Jaswant can be strongly critical of Jinnah as when he describes the Jinnah-Gandhi talks. The honesty of his narrative clearly reflects an ailing Jinnah's exasperation and indeed intransigence with Gandhi's views. Jaswant's impartiality is further emphasized when he delivers the ironic *coup de grace* in recounting what he believes to be the central paradox of Pakistan's creation in 1947 by virtue of 'the two nation theory'. The evolution of two splintered wings of Pakistan at Partition, with an almost equally large number of Muslims abandoned within the boundaries of the remaining Indian state, causes Jaswant to conclude (somewhat harshly but by no means unfairly) that Pakistan's creation by Jinnah led to a virtual abdication of responsibility for the fate of India's remaining Muslims who had voted for the League and were now left behind in political isolation in the midst of a formidable Hindu majority concentration.

Nobody should pretend that Jaswant's book is an authoritative or entirely unique chronicle of the historical events of Partition; nor is it the final, definitive biography on the life of Jinnah. Indeed, the book could be better described as an anthology of consistent historical reflection on the events of Partition, but with the added advantage of hindsight allowing us to evaluate the unintended (some might violently disagree, as some might say 'portended' instead) consequences of partition. Above all, He the historian is candid, honest and fair. Jaswant Singh covets no award for literary work or

even merit an undue recognition as a master historian in writing this book. Throughout his narrative, he remains committed to an endless search for the elusive truths contained within the enigma of Partition. As a consequence of his effort, rapid translations of the book in several South Asian languages are being made available in the near future. As a piece of communication strategy, Jaswant's book is brilliant. As a means of narrating history, it essentially confines itself to being a sustained reflection on the complexities and consequences of events that occurred in the mid-twentieth century, which has led him to devise an honest historical construct that seeks to answer fundamental questions which preoccupy our minds sixty odd years later: Was the Partition of India necessary or even inevitable? Or was the decision indeed desirable?

Clearly Jaswant has not sought for himself the accolade of a giant among historians, but what is true is that he has made a gigantic stride forward in reconciling many conflicting historical realities in a fair and impartial manner. With a healing hand and in a spirit of South Asian reconciliation, he has attempted (and I believe successfully) to initiate a new historical construct, more plausible, balanced and certainly more tolerant than what many fellow historians have towards a personality like Jinnah, who has invariably been vilified, if not outrightly demonized, in India. If Ayesha Jalal is the more remarkable Jinnah historian, Jaswant is clearly the more versatile and significant mass communicator. His volumes on Jinnah in their multilingual editions will open the way for a more informed and a fairer discourse on the history of 1947.

More than any of the other contending perspectives on Partition, Jaswant Singh's book has already begun the task it set itself to permanently change the way mainstream Indians *and* even Pakistanis view Jinnah's historical legacy in the future. That in itself is no mean achievement. If this had been accomplished with a measure of mud-slinging and vilification heaped upon the person of Jaswant Singh, this is but an indication of the stature of many of his most venomous critics, who range from invective hurling political red-necks to self-righteous intellectual pygmies. If consequently, Jaswant Singh emerges as humane, candid and above all overwhelmingly fair, this is a telling comment on the diminutive stature of his hardest detractors.

SHORT ON DEMOCRACY: ISSUES FACING INDIAN POLITICAL PARTIES edited by Arvind Sivaramakrishnan (Gurgaon: Imprint One), 2007: 260.

Reviewed by RAJESHWARI DESHPANDE (A Disjointed Reading of Indian Political Parties), *Economic and Political Weekly* XLIV.48 28 Nov. 2009.

Since the 1990s, there has been a renewed interest in the working of the Indian party system. A combination of factors like the regionalisation of politics and gradual dispersal of political competition; Mandalisation and unfolding of social contestations; multiple realignments of national and regional level political forces; the arrival of coalition politics; and the decline and partial revival of the Congress Party contributed to the renewal of studies of Indian political parties and party systems during the last two decades. The book under review is a part of this growing pool of studies. However, it presents a rather disjointed reading of the parties and of the functioning of Indian democracy. Broadly speaking, the changing nature of political parties and of politics in recent times has evoked two kinds of responses in the academic and journalistic circles. One kind of response is generally appreciative of the arrival of a competitive multiparty system in India and links it to gradual expansion of Indian democracy. The other sees these developments as an erosion of the rules of liberal democracy, and growing political instability leading to a deepening crisis of Indian democracy. In its discussion of the issues facing Indian political parties, *Short on Democracy: Issues Facing Indian Political Parties* tries to bring together both these perspectives, but in a clumsy manner. As the title of the book suggests, the editorial perspective of the book clearly sees the functioning of political parties as problematic and "short on democracy". The distrust towards the parties is complemented by hope about the working of democracy as millions of the poor and marginalised put their faith in it. The argument leading to this hope develops as the book progresses from journalistic criticisms of parties, mainly in terms of their leadership and of internal organisation, to a more academic discussion of structural and political factors behind the functioning of these parties, their political performance and the disconnect between the parties and democracy. The last essay (a reproduction of the first chapter in Javed Alam's

celebrated book *Who Wants Democracy?* (Orient Longman, 2004) discusses in detail the tenacity of Indian democracy in spite of several odds. However, the link between these two kinds of arguments is missing in the book, especially in its editorial introduction.

Uneven Tone

The book is an eclectic collection of nine essays. Three of them assess the political careers of individual parties like the Congress (Zoya Hasan), the Bahujan Samaj Party – BSP (Sudha Pai) and the Samajwadi Party (V Krishna Ananth). A few others offer comments of a more general kind on the overall nature of the party system and its functioning. There are three more stand-alone essays that address issues related to parties in an indirect manner. C. Lakshmanan inspects the more specific phenomenon of fan clubs of film stars to link it to the politics of Tamil Nadu. Radhika Desai's essay (originally published in the *New Left Review*) critically comments on Hindutva politics in its analysis of the 2004 parliamentary election outcome. The third is Alam's piece on "democracy and the people" mentioned earlier. The tone and texture of the essays in the collection is not the same and that makes it a rather incoherent comment on parties and Indian politics. Arvind Sivaramakrishnan introduction to the book and the first essay by Sukumar Muralidharan touch upon several issues and quote extensively from different scholarly works in order to develop a detailed overall comment on the nature of Indian democracy and party politics. In his discussion of the changing forms of authoritarianism in party politics, Muralidharan describes it as the "tyranny of identity". He argues that Indian democracy is beginning to approach the model of consociationalism where elite recruitment is through mobilisation of caste and community around narrow political agendas around elections (52). He sees it as an upshot of the "hesitant pathway that India adopted towards economic and political modernity" and also that of lack of transparent and democratic methods of leadership choice. The crisis of the political parties thus looms large for Muralidharan as the crisis for Indian democracy.

A similar perspective on the fate of political parties is shared by Radhika Ramaseshan as she discusses the "fault lines in the Indian party system", by Neena Vyas in what she describes as the "personality cult in Indian politics" and by V. Krishna Ananth in

his essay on the Samajwadi Party. The essays say a number of things in common regarding the failures of leadership, lack of internal organisation and parochial visions that parties follow in the wake of narrow identity politics. The implicit point of comparison here are the parties of the “more advanced democracies” of the west. It is interesting to note how many of the essays in the collection extensively quote North American scholarship on Indian politics of the 1950s and the 1960s to understand and analyse the party politics of the 1990s and later. The changing nature of party politics in India has been extensively studied in the past few years (Hasan 2004; Sridharan and De Souza 2007) and the literature recognises the fact that Indian “parties are under pressure” (Suri 2005). However, the studies of Indian parties during the last two decades also recognise the distinctive nature of Indian democracy (in particular and of the global south in general) and the peculiar socio-economic context in which it operates. This recognition is not a mere celebration of the procedural successes of Indian democracy or a mere sympathetic reading of the working of the parties in India. But the recognition marks a different kind of reading of democracy all over the world and in a comparative perspective. The first set of essays in the book under review do not seem to be aware of these changing perspectives and instead focus on personalities and their failures in discussing the challenges before the Indian parties. Pai’s essay on the BSP in Uttar Pradesh helps us understand the challenges in a better manner as it discusses the “paradox of Indian democracy” where, while the democratic institutions have survived rapid social change, we are also witnessing internal decline and the decay of parties as institutions (101). Pai tries to explain how the crisis of the political parties is, in a way, a crisis of Indian society that remains hierarchical, communal and patriarchal in spite of much social change. The chapter by Hasan on the decline and revival of the Congress Party in the post-Indira Gandhi phase takes the argument further in exploring the policy dimensions of the working of parties and the state. She describes Indian democracy as a “two track democracy” that on the one hand, offers benefits to the elite and on the other hand, gives voice to the common people. In explaining the revival of the Congress in terms of its changing focus on policies for the poor, Hasan shows how Indian parties and the state face a difficult task in balancing the two dimensions of democracy in India. The complex nature of democratic endeavours of the last two decades and their implications for electoral and party politics are elaborately

discussed by Desai in her analysis of the election verdict in 2004. It is a long essay that tracks the unfolding of what Desai refers to as the, “grim new dynamic” of the 1990s. The complex and fractured verdict of the 2004 came amidst multiple instabilities and churning unleashed by the dynamics of the 1990s. While investigating the main sources of political instability implicit in the electoral verdict, the essay offers a detailed comment on the long-term political trends, situating them in the changing context of India’s political economy. It also comments on the responsibilities and difficulties that the Congress Party faces both as a ruling party and also as a mainstream political party that can halt the march of Hindutva. Desai talks of the disconnect between the nature of the Congress’ support base and its policies as the main challenge for the party.

Inherent Disconnect

In a way it is the disconnect inherent to Indian democracy that many of the essays in the volume touch upon. As Alam argues in his concluding essay, democracy in India has acquired deeper roots over the last 50 years and people are more favourably disposed towards it today. This hope creates a responsibility for the political parties to represent people’s aspirations and to deliver democratic goods to them. But the stark failure of the parties in this respect brings out the other aspect of the functioning of democracy where elites try to appropriate it and to limit it to bare procedures. The crisis for political parties in India in this sense becomes a part of a larger crisis for the democratic system. Although the book gives some useful pointers towards the understanding of this larger crisis, it fails to situate the working of political parties in it. Even in terms of assessment of the parties it does not pay adequate attention to many issues like the distinctive survival of the communist parties in India and the challenges they face, the issues of party finances, policy discourse and the role of parties as governing agencies, etc. Instead the main argument of the book and especially its editorial framework limits itself to one dimensional scrutiny of the work of parties.

References

- DeSouza, Peter and E Sridharan, (ed. (2007): *India’s Political Parties* (New Delhi: Sage).
 Hasan, Zoya, ed. (2004): *Parties and Party Politics in India* (New Delhi: OUP (paperback))
 Suri, K C (2005): *Parties Under Pressure*, Occasional Paper (Delhi: Lokniti-CSDS).

THE STATE OF INDIA'S DEMOCRACY edited by Sumit Ganguly, Larry Diamond and Marc F Plattner (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 2009: xxvii + 231.

Reviewed by SANJEEB MUKHERJEE (*Indian Democracy: Puzzle of Unanswered Questions*), *Economic and Political Weekly*. XLIV. 43. 24 October 2009.

It is time we moved away from soft, self-congratulatory and patronising assessments of Indian democracy and asked hard questions about popular rule, popular demands and popular justice, because democracy is all about the self-rule of the people. In the introduction of *The State of India's Democracy*, Sumit Ganguly makes two such familiar points: one, "The emergence and persistence of Indian democracy are theoretical and historical anomalies" (p ix), and, two, the essays in this book argue that in India "democracy is faring very well indeed and shows signs of continuing vitality" (p xviii). Of course, to balance his claim, he makes some qualifications about ethnic violence, partisan law enforcement agencies and stark regional differences.

The puzzle of Indian democracy that makes me wonder is why could not democracy establish a modicum of justice, why is the majority steeped in poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and oppression, especially when it is claimed that the majority rules or decides under a democracy. In spite of popular rule, popular leaders and popular ideologies in Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal, why could not they address serious questions of popular justice? In other words, why has not the anxiety of the elites, that under democracy the masses would rob them of their riches and privileges come true in India? Or, why have not the worst fears of Marxists come true that under popular pressure the ruling classes would dump democracy, which is what they do in most of the third world?

Threat from Below

The State of India's Democracy is divided into four parts, namely, Politics, State, Society and Economy, which obviously is a comprehensive coverage. In the first part, Christophe Jaffrelot has written on caste and the rise of marginalised groups and analysed the challenge posed by lower castes, classes and communities to

the decades-long rule by traditional upper caste elites. He calls it a revolution “through the polling booth” (p 81). He makes an important conclusion by saying that popular power in this time of liberalisation and market dominance has been undermined because the market has freed itself from the state and the elite are happy about it. So he argues that “For Indian democracy, the real danger lies more in this changing mentality of the elite than in any revolutionary threat from below” (p 83). The relative success of Indian democracy is due to the model, which was built by the elites from the time of the national movement and perfected by our Constitution- makers and Jawaharlal Nehru. This model, I would suggest, consisted of two sets of strategies; first, make pre-emptive moves and then, persuade the people. And the most powerful pre-emptive move was the establishment of a parliamentary democracy with universal franchise, which in most other countries came after years of popular struggle. This strategy continues to work in the form of reducing the voting age or enacting welfare and protective legislation for the people. This is accompanied by a hegemony building strategy by the elites by promising justice, welfare and development and taking some such measures, both real and symbolic.

Co-option, Compromises and Coercion

The second set consists of a strategy, which involves co-option, compromises and coercion. Thus we find new backward class, dalit or even the left leaders, who had put in long years of popular struggles being firmly ensconced in power and turning into more cunning copies of the former elites. Through compromises the Indian state has managed to co-opt these leaders making a caricature of the silent revolution, which Jaffrelot is talking of. The success of this strategy legitimises our democracy and the State. Finally, coercion by the armed might of the State defends and restores this elite democracy and it consists of both, focused localised coercion as well as spectacular wars which the state conducts against the people, whether in Kashmir, Chhattisgarh or in the north-east. The balance and mix of these elements varies over time and space. The success of this strategy has kept out serious political forces, like those led by Medha Patkar or the Maoists, who otherwise could have made a major difference to the elite character of our democracy. In fact,

the more they shun the institutional forms of our democracy, the more the State resorts to greater doses of coercion. Finally, for a country as big and diverse as India, no elite rule is possible without some form of democratic sanction. Rajeev Gowda and Sridharan write about political parties and the party system and the central argument is that the decline of the Congress and the rise of new parties has not undermined the basic power sharing system, and has, in fact, contributed to the consolidation of democracy. Steven Wilkinson makes a reading of the defeat of the Bharatiya Janata Party in the 2004 elections and raises the importance of coalition building. Rajat Ganguly's essay is on democracy and ethnic conflict. He argues that secularism, federalism and reservations have managed to accommodate diversities, and in spite of serious ethnic strife in Kashmir, Punjab or in the north-east and the state repression, at the end of the day "India is still a firmly established constitutional democracy" (p 63).

In the second section on the State, Pratap Bhanu Mehta raises some hard questions about the Supreme Court, which otherwise enjoys the greatest trust and credibility amongst all Indian public institutions. He points to three ironies; first, even as the higher judiciary entertains public interest litigations, it is blind to the mind-boggling backlogs and criminal delays; second, the Supreme Court has failed to articulate a coherent public philosophy in spite of its worthy pronouncements; and finally, with all its power the court has not been able to explain the source of its authority (p 109). Mehta adds, "The legitimacy and power that India's judiciary does enjoy most likely flow not from a clear and consistent constitutional vision, but rather from its opposite" (p 113). If this proposition is clearly established, it could be the most damning indictment of the Supreme Court. The authority and vision of the Supreme Court ideally flows from the Constitution and it is supposed to uphold the public philosophy of the Constitution, but then why these ironies, which Mehta brings to the fore? The reason I guess is simple; our judges and our political philosophers and public intellectuals have not cared to read the Indian Constitution, especially the vision underlying the Directive Principles and the Fundamental Rights. The Directive Principles not only articulate the Constitution's public philosophy, it offers India a new and radical vision of justice and democracy. It is the spirit of the Constitution and uninformed by this spirit, the Supreme Court is reduced to any conceited *munsif*. The American

Supreme Court at one crucial time performed this role when it expounded and enforced the Bill of Rights. Chhattisgarh, Kashmir and Nandigram pose the question of justice to Indian democracy and unless it is addressed, Indian democracy cannot be sustained or legitimised. In two well-written pieces, Subrata Mitra and Arvind Verma discuss federalism and the police. Mitra has shown how federalism has bolstered democracy and how economic liberalism will further strengthen federalism. Verma points out the contradiction between a violent and brutal police force and democracy.

Emerging Civil Society

The third section of the book addresses civil society with articles by Niraja Jayal and Rob Jenkins, and Praveen Swami on the media revolution in India. I think the idea of civil society and corruption underlying Jayal and Jenkins' articles are rather emaciated. Jayal narrowly defines civil society and thus admits that "large sections of citizens remain outside the scope of organised civil society" due to the failure of political parties to perform western style interest-aggregation functions (p 143). This assumes the proper western bourgeois model of civil society to be the norm, which we have to emulate. I would argue that outside our bourgeois enclaves a new kind of civil society, inspired by democracy, justice and rights, is emerging within castes and communities. It is emerging among dalits and backward classes and the best example is the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu. It is a vernacular civil society, which is almost invisible in the English-speaking enclaves we inhabit. This non-bourgeois civil society among the people not only has a long past, but I believe has a future as well. In this context, I would wish to read Benode Bihari Mukherjee's mural on medieval Indian saints and subalterns in Santiniketan as a vision of a democracy and a civil society to come. Or, the dalit poet Namdeo Dhasal's pregnant line "Equality for all/or/Death for India". Jenkins' idea of corruption is reduced to bribery leaving out the widespread abuse of power and the subversion of the law and the Constitution. Praveen Swami in a well-documented article on the media shows the phenomenal rise of the vernacular press and satellite television, which I think is a part of the emerging vernacular civil society. Between 2005 and 2006, the vernacular newspapers grew from 191 million to 203.6

million, whereas the English readership remained static at around 21 million (p 181).

Economy and Democracy

The fourth section of the book deals with the economy and democracy. Sunila Kale focuses on inequality in the states, which leads to demands for greater autonomy or secession. Aseema Sinha examines the relationship between economic reforms, markets, globalisation and economic growth and democracy in contemporary India. She, in sync with the thrust of the book, argues that economic liberalisation has reinforced and stabilised democracy. I am perplexed by such a blasé take on the most serious global challenge facing democracy in our time. Under globalisation, capitalism is doing two things; first, it is subverting the sovereignty of states by removing the economy and economic resources from its control, and second, it is engaged in the most rapacious round of primitive accumulation by forcibly acquiring land and other natural resources, for which it shifts its trust from the market to the state. This is not only destroying the environment, but is a veritable war on the lives, livelihoods and cultures of the masses. Democracy is not just a procedural apparatus, where the people only have a quinary voting right. Democracy is self rule or swaraj, it is based on justice and today in the time of globalisation democracy has to address the question of global justice as well. However, under our elite democracy, economic reforms-led high economic growth has become a major tool in the hands of the state to bolster the Indian model of democracy by using the additional revenue generated by this growth to further play out its strategy of making pre-emptive moves, co-option, concessions and coercion. The left had always feared that the liberalisation-privatisation model would compel the state to withdraw from all welfare expenditures. Not only has that not happened, but the Manmohan Singh government is actually spending a lot more on popular welfare measures. This is the price of legitimacy and stability under conditions of democracy without justice. However, this model of democracy is under serious strain and has exploded in Nandigram, Chhattisgarh, Singur and Kashmir. When popular resistance defies the co-option-concession model, the State resorts to violence and the people make a call for rebellion or even revolution. Both history and philosophy testify that to rebel is

justified. The right to rebel is an elementary democratic right; it is inviolable and inalienable. The right to make a revolution is not merely some extreme or radical communist demand. Classical liberals like John Locke defend it and it is also enshrined in the American and French Declarations and their constitutions too uphold it. To me, the more fundamental issue is the relationship between revolution and democracy. Rebellions are not aimed at democracy; they are aimed at the State, a state that has usurped power and has become fundamentally unjust. The State, democracy and capitalism are separate entities, though in countries with bourgeois hegemony they work in harmony. Most revolutions in history in their fight against state and capital have thrown away democracy as well. The challenge before the people and radical thought is how to defend and deepen democracy and fight for justice, and at the same time, resist the State and capitalism.

RECONCILIATION IN POST GODHRA GUJARAT: THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY by **T K Oommen (Delhi: Pearson Education), 2008: XVI + 288.**

Reviewed by BRITTA OHM (Genocide, Reconciliation and Justice in Gujarat), *Economic and Political Weekly*. XLIV. 28. 11 July 2009.

T K Oommen has a strong record of active involvement with matters of multiculturalism and politics. His latest book *Reconciliation in Post-Godhra Gujarat* is a powerful example of this engagement, and the most important one given the solemnity of the topic: the anti-Muslim pogrom or genocidal attack in Gujarat that lasted from February to May 2002, and the initiatives for post-violence reconciliation. *Reconciliation in Post-Godhra Gujarat* is only partly a sociological analysis of the aftermath of the violence. Predominantly, it is an account and an evaluation of a remarkable project that Oommen joined in 2002 as chair of the advisory committee. The initiative, the Gujarat Harmony Project (GHP), sponsored by Care India, served as an umbrella of altogether 12 partners and was started in May 2002 with emergency relief operations, functioning with the objective of its more fundamental concern, reconciliation, until November 2004. Two of the organisations were what Oommen calls “strategic partners” that were versed in the areas of training, research and advocacy: Unnati, a rights-based NGO, active in the field of dalit,

gender, disability and peace-building issues, and the National Institute for Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS). The remaining 10 “implementing” organisations were in a collaborative context “entrusted with the task of implementing the objectives and activities mandated by the GHP” (p 87).

They were reaching from the organisations active in feminism and women’s empowerment like – Ahmedabad Women’s Action Group (AWAG) and Olakh, Vadodara, Muslim and Christian NGOs like Gujarat Sarvajanik Welfare Trust (GSWT) and St Xavier’s Social Service Society (XSSS), organisations related to particular significant employment and social groups like Kamdar Swasthya Suraksha Mandal (KSSM), which has originated amongst textile mill workers and the Tribhuvandas Foundation, which is related to the so called white revolution, epitomised in the milk cooperative Amul Dairy and the organisations concerned with equitable development through integrated settlements like Saath. The efforts of coordinating such a big initiative so quickly deserve great appreciation, particularly as very little of these efforts triggered into the media and thus towards the larger public perception. Moreover, Oommen distinctively clarifies that, because of the far-reaching implications they entail, endeavours towards reconciliation are usually omitted in the aftermath of violence, operations reaching generally not beyond the first two common “R”s: relief and rehabilitation, which keep victims at the level of being recipients and partners, respectively, while in the case of reconciliation, they are required to become self-responsible carriers of the process in order to generate and ensure a sustainable cohabitation (p 17).

Riots or Genocide?

Oommen undertakes quite early in the book an explicit assessment of the question whether the Gujarat violence should be termed “riots” or “genocide” (pp 71-72). Probably consciously avoiding allusion to the uneven polarisation of the larger public debate, in which the use of the terms and their mutual exclusiveness became a marker of the respective political stance, Oommen leaves throughout the book no doubt about the exceptionality of the violence in terms of state orchestration and uncompromising anti-Muslim hatred. However, he argues for a definition of genocide that transcends minimalist definitions – like that of the UN of 1948, which is limited

to ethnicity, race and religion and fails to take into account other reasons for systematic torture and persecution (such as political opinion) as well as non-state actors (such as the wider network of the Sangh parivar) – as much as maximalist framings, which run the danger of including any war situation in the category. Oommen suggests a more inclusive definition of the term that refers to the eliminating deliberation of one segment of society against another and that is able to adequately grasp that “in the case of Gujarat 2002, both the state and civil society conjured up the genocidal situation that made it particularly gruesome” (p 72). Indeed, this definitional move is able to recognise not only that there were – even if to a much lesser degree – Hindu victims of Muslim (counter-) aggression also in Gujarat, who tended to be attacked less because they were Hindus, but also because they were identified with the politics of the Sangh parivar, whereas the Muslims were systematically attacked because they were Muslims and ideologically identified with the evils of Islam, Pakistan and the global jihad. This differentiation is also important because it allows acknowledgement of the substantial involvement of dalits and adivasis in the violence and their particular ambivalent role as targets and tools of the Hindutva ideology and as perpetrators against Muslims. It thus enables a socio-political approach towards the basic topic of the book – societal reconciliation – that attempts to rise above mere Hindu-Muslim antagonism in communal terms and thus to avoid the reproduction of Hindu nationalist framings. On the other hand, it yet hardly mitigates the difficulty of the task that the author, and with him a large number of NGO-workers on the ground in Gujarat, put before him: how is reconciliation at the societal level at all possible after such unprecedented “will to kill” that did involve large sections of the Hindu majority?

Societal Reconciliation

Is “reconciliation” the appropriate term to use as it – not much different from “riots” in that sense – seems to imply two more or less equal partners that reach out to each other? The implied paradox is probably most aptly expressed in the quote of a Muslim woman, who availed a loan from the Muslim GSWT in order to rebuild her burnt-down house but refused to attend any of the offered programmes for peace and harmony: “When we are not responsible

for the violence, how can we bring peace?" (p 153). And finally, how sustainable can reconciliation be when the perpetrators, amongst them not least the recently re-elected Gujarati state government under Narendra Modi, are not brought to book? In this context, and reconciliation and its intricacies being the central theme of the book, it is a bit surprising to find the concept of reconciliation unequivocally culturalised on the outset. Oommen describes it rather ontologically as "the genius of India" (p 3), which historically enabled the accommodation, evolvment and preservation of diverse religious traditions but which was seriously disturbed "for the first time" with the "Muslim conquest" that led to a coexistence of Islam and the "Indic religions" with "considerable unease" (p 5/6). Given Oommen's otherwise explicit objective to transcend ethnic and religious ascriptions and his emphasis on syncretic traditions between Hinduism and Islam elsewhere in the book, one is puzzled in the face of this rather mystifying introduction, which easily talks of the "refusal to proselytise" (p 5) of smaller migrant religions like Zoroastrianism and the Baha'i faith (while indicating only in passing that their acceptance rather depended on a renunciation) and the fact that Sikhism "did not substantially disturb the religious harmony of India" (ibid: without mentioning the serious persecution that followers of Sikhism were exposed to in early modern and modern India).

Detailed Evaluation

Nevertheless, this does not diminish, for one, the detailed evaluation of the various GHP-involved NGOs and their specific activities as well as the relatively extensive accounts of beneficiaries and local participants in the different initiatives. The latter in particular represent a very valuable source, because they offer an insight into the reluctance and partly apparently insurmountable refusal, but also the willingness and even enthusiasm of the steps that individual members of the involved groups (Hindus, Muslims, dalits and adivasis) have taken towards (or further away) from each other. Most of all, though, the evaluation allows for a glimpse on the depth of shock and trauma that such a situation of extreme violence generates. There have been nearly 50 outright wars worldwide since the second world war, nearly all of them are taking place in the non-western hemisphere (and largely in post-colonial countries),

and we have hardly any accounts of the long-term psychological (and physical) consequences. When we assess in relation the degree of mental pain that this genocidal attack alone, which does not count amongst the registered wars, has brought about, we get an idea of the immensity of distress that a large proportion of the global population – which is, moreover, in addition exposed to heightened expectations in terms of economic and political performance – has to cope with, and thus can also vaguely gauge the potentiality of future conflict. It is against this backdrop that Oommen underlines the indispensability not only of accounting the consequences of the violence, but of an active reconciliation in Gujarat, despite all the hurdles described. With the work's explicit focus on the majority of the poor and disadvantaged, reconciliation becomes, first of all, a counterstrategy to the obvious tactics, specifically of the Gujarati BJP and Narendra Modi to play off dalits, adivasis and Muslims against each other on communal lines in the context of economic and political favouritism. Moreover, reconciliation willy-nilly has to involve a substantial part of the majority community, i.e., the community of the perpetrators, even at the risk of downplaying the individual sympathy for or involvement in the violence. It is at this point, though, that two significant aspects gain currency. One is the relation of the Gujarat government to the GHP-initiatives, and vice versa. Oommen points out repeatedly the well-known inactivity, complicity and active impediment regarding even relief and rehabilitation measures as well as the well-aimed endeavours towards saffronisation of education on the part of the state (as well as the then central) government. At the same time, he cautions NGOs against integrating people in their projects, who continue to be members of the Sangh parivar (p 214). All of the GHP's activities were, however, while decisively involving Muslim, Christian and secular NGOs, located in the areas of relief, rehabilitation and in the context of reconciliation, specifically, education (in terms of applying creative pedagogy for the traumatised young, efforts at overcoming myths and prejudices against the other community through common learning and life skills-programmes and awareness raising with regard to legal rights). It would thus have been interesting to know more about how all these initiatives, which involved altogether a rather large amount of participants, were received by the government and organised Sangh parivar activists, in how far they had to be negotiated, and under what (legal) terms

they were ultimately implemented. The other aspect concerns the question of justice. Oommen clearly does not minimise the importance of legal justice, which, in contrast to earlier Hindu-Muslim violence, gained particular precedence in Gujarat because of the obvious genocidal implications but still awaits operation. He calls it a vital requirement in terms of accountability, but he also accentuates that “justice alone does not bring about reconciliation” (p 257). Taking a very pragmatic perspective, he suggests yet another definitional distinction between retributive justice – which carries the realistic danger of further antagonising the perpetrators in communal terms – and restorative justice – which builds on an extra-legal acceptance of guilt under the premise of the unavailability of future cohabitation and he does cite various encouraging examples, where this did work.

Conclusion

The Gujarat violence, however, and this is what the book overlooks, represented not only a new dimension in terms of state complicity, organised brutality and hatred. It has taken place in the course of a profound redefinition of legitimacy and accountability itself. Oommen underlines that the government of Gujarat “cannot be a party in bringing about reconciliation between Hindus and Muslims unless the identified perpetrators of violence show remorse and openly admit their crimes and confess” (p 61). The matter of fact is, though, that they *have* confessed in all public (in the November 2007 issue of *Tehelka* magazine), and the fact that it is precisely these – proud! – confessions that have been deemed as an additional advertisement for the Modi-government on the eve of its re-election mark the overall shift in the public discourse (and electoral behaviour at least in Gujarat) that has been palpable ever since the violence itself. What follows from this shift for the very reliability of reconciliation and restorative justice? *Reconciliation in Post-Godhra Gujarat* is a most valuable account that provides not only useful definitional suggestions, but also a sensitive and differentiated analysis of post-violence efforts towards Hindu-Muslim reconciliation and its specific framework and intricacies. It compellingly shows that there is no future without reconciliation, especially as far as it concerns alliances of the powerless against the powerful, and that starting with the people is the only way when

there is no starting with the state. Yet, particularly in the context of its pragmatic perspective, the book and its vital topic would have greatly profited from taking into account that in Gujarat, anti-minority violence and its prevention are not a matter of individual remorse and legal accountability, but of public (i.e., majoritarian) legitimacy and its orchestration. There is reason to hope that the insights and ties that the GHP has been able to initiate amongst its participants have a lasting quality. But hope alone is a very shaky ground to proceed on.

INDIA'S NUCLEAR POLICY by **Bharat Karnad**, Praeger Security International, Westport, CT and London, 2008: xi + 221.

Reviewed by CHRISTOPHER CLARY in *Strategic Analysis*. 33.6. Novemebr 2009.

Bharat Karnad's *India's Nuclear Policy* represents the first entrant of the third wave of books on India's nuclear weapons programme. The first wave was characterized by studies either mostly complete before the May 1998 Pokhran-II tests or journalistic accounts quickly completed in the aftermath of those tests. Itty Abraham's *Making of the Indian Atomic Bomb* (1999), George Perkovich's *India's Nuclear Bomb* (1999), and Raj Chengappa's *Weapons of Peace* (2000) all chronicled the efforts of India's strategic enclave to acquire nuclear weapons in the face of international opposition, with Chengappa's book notable for the attention it paid to India's successes in ballistic missile development. Co-mingled with this first wave was a related group of books with a much clearer prescriptive agenda. This second wave of books was less interested in providing a narrative of India's nuclear developments (though often such a description was included); rather these authors' primary purpose was to argue for a preferred size and structure for India's young arsenal. K. Raja Menon's *A Nuclear Strategy for India* (2000), Gurmeet Kanwal's *Nuclear Defense* (2001), Ashley Tellis' *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture* (2001), and Karnad's own *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security* (2002) have proven to be the more enduring contributions in this genre.¹ Now, over a decade after India surprised the world with its nuclear tests, Karnad's 2008 account is the first to probe into how India has actually managed its arsenal, rather than just analysing how India should do so. Karnad's 2002 book had the appropriate subtitle of

'The Realist Foundations of Strategy'. It is a book that can justly be called an epitome. With over 750 pages, the book attempted to do three tasks simultaneously: (1) challenge what Karnad viewed as a naïve moralism that was a recurrent feature in Indian security rhetoric and firmly establish the logic of realism; (2) orient India's nuclear developments in the context of India's post-independence foreign policy; and (3) argue forcefully for the necessity of a nuclear force with thermonuclear weapons. Karnad's 2002 book is a crusading tract. It sought to awaken India from a stupor, to energize a country that for too long had succumbed to what Karnad termed a 'bovine pacifism'. In many ways, Karnad's new *India's Nuclear Policy* is an update to and a compression of his earlier work. With around 200 pages of text, it will be much more digestible to the casual reader. Much of the proselytizing for realism has been eliminated, though it still forms the background to Karnad's analysis. Even in this shorter, calmer work, Karnad retains his strengths. His writing is clear and forceful. His extensive footnoting allows the reader to weigh Karnad's factual claims (a facet of scholarship that should be commonplace, but is often lacking in India's strategic studies literature). Finally, he still intersperses his text with bold arguments that challenge the reader with their audacity, even if one might question their prudence.

The book is divided into four sections. First, Karnad seeks to frame India's nuclear developments within the current international system. In this section, Karnad argues that India was compelled to undertake nuclear developments in a world where the dominant powers continued to believe nuclear weapons were 'the final arbiter of relations between states' (p. 32). He argues, 'In the resulting nuclearization of international relations, the non-possession of nuclear weapons has become a liability for states' (p. 32). For Karnad, nuclear weapons are not just about absolute security against existential threats – though at core he remains a realist and believes 'there are no better means of self-protection than nuclear weapons' (p. 6). But nuclear weapons are more. They are the currency of power, but they also provide an energizing *élan*. Nuclear weapons are an important safeguard against India becoming 'psychologically crippled in a crisis with China' (p. 32). He certainly can understand Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's description to *India Today* that the 1998 nuclear tests gave India *shakti*, a self-empowering energy and will.² The book's second section provides a concise description of

India's nuclear history up to May 1998, emphasizing the continuity represented by the 1998 tests and dismissing those who viewed Pokhran-II as a rupture with India's history (p. 60). For those unwilling to trudge through the definitive 600-plus-page Perkovich account of this period, Karnad provides a remarkable amount of detail in his condensed 26-page mini-history.

What separates Karnad's book from the earlier wave of histories is his two sections on post-1998 developments, one examining the technical and doctrinal advances since 1998 and the last section examining the important nuclear weapons-relevant topics of limited war and the US–India civil nuclear cooperation agreement. He reveals significant new information about India's force posture, command and control system, and other steps taken to operationalise the deterrent. In light of the continued (and arguably excessive) secrecy surrounding many aspects of India's nuclear weapons programme, Karnad's reporting benefits from his close ties to senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders. That also means, however, his account of the post-2004 developments is shallower and more dependent on Karnad's sources within the Indian military.

Karnad retains his ability to surprise through bold argument. Like several Indian commentators, Karnad encourages the reader to focus on the primary challenge of China, rather than be distracted by the 'strategic nuisance' of Pakistan (p. 36). Karnad, more than most Indian nuclear analysts, has internalized the US Cold War literature and specifically its concerns about escalation dominance. He argues that Pakistan's nuclear deterrent against India is not credible: 'deterrence will not work for the weaker country because it lacks the capacity to survive the nuclear pain and punishment . . .' (p. 3). He explains, 'The premise here is that the bigger country with the bigger forces can absorb and, therefore, survive nuclear damage better than a smaller resource-poor less well-endowed nuclear-weapon state and that this fact ultimately will deter the smaller state from committing suicide . . .' (p. 128). His concern that nuclear weapons are necessary to deter American adventurism has mellowed significantly since his earlier book, no doubt an evolution reflecting today's conventional wisdom that US hegemony is quickly eroding. Karnad has placed a marker down for other authors and scholars, particularly those with sources in the Congress Party as well as Karnad's sources in the BJP.

Karnad only touches on four developments that have the

potential to alter South Asia's strategic landscape in the coming years. India's development of missile defenses may dramatically alter the calculations of Pakistan and China of how many missiles they need to target onto Indian territory. The development by all of southern Asia's powers of cruise missiles will dramatically alter the types of delivery vehicles available for nuclear weapons. In turn, the development of cruise missiles may contribute to India and Pakistan fleshing out the naval leg of their aspirational triads. Finally, even though Karnad may abhor the civil nuclear deal, India's capacity to produce weapons-grade material may be significantly increased now that it can import foreign uranium for its civilian programme, freeing up all of its domestic reserves for military purposes. This is not a criticism of Karnad's current work, but rather a reminder that scholars will be busy in attempting to keep up with southern Asia's strategic dynamism.

INDIA - THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF GROWTH, STAGNATION AND THE STATE, 1951-2007 by **Matthew McCartney**, London, New York, New Delhi: Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2009: xxvii + 278.

Reviewed by MUJIBUR REHMAN, *Development and Change*. 40.5. Septemebr 2009.

Ever since India launched economic reforms in 1991 and 1992 — articulated in the budget by Manmohan Singh — there has been a growing body of literature emerging from scholars of rival schools of ideology about the fate of India's reform process, what led to it and how it has unfolded. This discourse, however, is led mostly by economists, who often use various econometric analyses to study India's political economy. The book under review is one of the few titles in recent times that seek to explain India's political economy by looking at the transformations occurring in the state as an institution, as well as the behaviour of the state.

McCartney offers a convincing argument that the trajectory of India's political economy is determined by a number of factors in which the state plays a decisive role, such as the mobilization and allocation of the economic surplus to those wishing to invest productively, particularly in the finance arena. He also discusses the role of state as institutions that are necessary for overcoming

the conflicts inherently associated with economic development. One of the peculiarities of India's political economy is that the country has been ruled by the Congress Party for decades (since 1947) and it has remained a major player in the current era of coalition politics. Its dominance in India's democratic politics is such that scholars describe the Indian party system as the Congress system. McCartney attempts to explain India's political economy in terms of the rise and fall of the Congress party in the electoral arena, and the related transformations unfolding within. According to him, the Congress Party previously played the role of conflict management by incorporating dissent, providing mediation and allocating (political rents) relatively efficiently. The Indian state continued to be successful in mobilizing resources—but after the mid-1960s was increasingly unable to allocate them productively, and India became locked in a political economy of stagnation. But the claim that the Congress Party played a complementary role is not new; there was a study by Myron Weiner which made a similar argument.

The author describes one episode of stagnation and three episodes of growth during the period. The various ways of categorizing an episode of growth/stagnation are considered. The book considers both quantitative and qualitative factors. The definition is not made purely on the basis of average rates of GDP growth. He also describes the complementary roles for the state in promoting economic development for which the state must: (1) mobilize and allocate the economic surplus to those wishing to engage in productive investment (finance); (2) ensure that the surplus is invested productively (production); (3) utilize institutions to overcome the inherent conflicts that exist during the process of development (institutions). One of the arguments the book advances is that the Indian state was able to overcome the conflicts associated with industrialization because it contained within itself an inclusive institution — the Congress Party. The Party worked as a mechanism to absorb dissent. Why it was able to do this — but other parties were not— is another legitimate question that needs incisive analysis and is ignored in this book.

McCartney analyses stagnation during the period 1965 to 1980 and challenges the argument that there was a problem of mobilization because the Indian state was unable to tax property and income from profit. He shows that the state was successful in mobilizing, but the pattern of mobilization was different compared

to the previous era. He also discusses how sharp falls in both public and private corporate investment after 1965–66 illustrate that the state became less efficient in allocating resources to projects essential for development. Thus, the major argument is that the stagnation after the mid-1960s was not due to the failure of resource mobilization but to the fact that the surplus was being consumed and invested less productively. If that is the case, then the blame lies on the shoulders of the policy-making community and not on the institution of the Indian state.

McCartney shows that between 1979–80 and 1991 the state was unable to overcome the conflicts associated with development. The Congress Party, although dominant electorally during the 1980s, was no longer the inclusive institution it had been in the 1950s. Congress in the 1980s was unable to incorporate dissident groups other than through broad and expensive fiscal transfers; its local level organization had disappeared. The party was unable to accommodate local factions or provide opportunities within the party for local elites. But the author seems to have missed the argument that such incapacities of the Congress Party were not of its own making. Rather it was the massive democratization processes that generated awareness among people and politicized the citizenry in a manner that crippled old forms of co-optation from delivering results. Next follows an analysis of how the Indian state influenced several areas between 1991 and 2007, which were key to mobilization and allocation of resources. These areas were: mobilizing domestic savings; creating institutions to mobilize private sector savings; influencing retained earnings and profitability. The state was also able to draw people into its project through an ideological appeal, even though people were not gaining from reform. One would like to ask why the state was able to do this at this point in time but not before, as there had been efforts to liberalize, particularly in the early 1980s. Without doubt the book shares interesting insights on many issues of the Indian political economy, state and party politics; yet the absence of any analysis regarding the role and nature of non-Congress parties remains one of its major shortcomings. All in all it is refreshing to read a book whose research is non-conventional in many ways. It will assist scholars who hope to learn what is right and what is still wrong about the Indian economy.

Reference

Weiner, M. (1967), *Party Building in a New Nation: The Indian National Congress*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

BEYOND COUNTER INSURGENCY: BREAKING THE IMPASSE IN NORTHEAST INDIA edited by Sanjeeb Baruah (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), 2009: viii+383

Reviewed by UDAYON MISHRA (Dialectics of Nationhood), *Economic and Political Weekly*. XLIV. 36. 5 September 2009.

This is a collection of essays which is purportedly knit together by a shared dissatisfaction about the ground realities of the situation in the north-eastern states of India and an attempt to rethink “new ways of approaching (these) conflicts and on ways to resolve them”. The editor of the volume, Sanjeeb Baruah, states in his introduction that it is not intended to be “inclusive” and that the contributors to the volume “share neither a common theoretical perspective nor a single political position”. This, one would agree, could be both an advantage as well as a disadvantage for the volume in question. While its avoidance of “authentic”(?) voices could open up newer approaches to the complex scenario of the north-eastern region, yet the attempt to yoke together multiple, possibly contradictory voices, could very well create a sense of confusion in the minds of the readers and defeat somewhat the very purpose of going beyond counter-insurgency and break the impasse on north-east India. I am afraid Baruah’s edited volume has both these strengths and weaknesses.

In his elaborate and perceptive introduction, Sanjeeb Baruah refers to the north-eastern region’s “strange” multiplicity of ethnically based low intensity conflicts and tries to relate these to four major factors. One, the region’s particular ecology and history of state formation, two, certain legacies of colonial knowledge, three, the frontier quality of the region and massive demographic transformation that has been going on in modern times, and four, the peculiarities of the constitutional political order of post-colonial India. After discussing the first three factors in brief, Baruah argues that post-colonial India’s constitutional order has been largely responsible for fuelling the proliferation of ethnic demands. Drawing a dividing line between the legitimacy of many an ethnic demand and the political forms dictated by the particular constitutional-legal context, Baruah says that provisions like the Sixth Schedule have

helped certain tribes of the north-eastern region to make successful demands for full-fledged states while at the same time creating a sense of insecurity amongst other ethnic groups who are faced with the possibility of their territories being bargained away in secret talks between the government and rebel leaders.

India and Its Contestations

In this context, Baruah makes a valid point when he refers to the Indian State's almost unfettered power to alter the boundaries of any existing state of the Indian Union.¹ This puts the smaller states at a disadvantage in relation to the bigger ones who are better placed to resist division. This provision can be, and has been, put to use by the centre to break up existing states and create new ones as part of its strategy to contain militant ethnic demands, thereby giving rise to fragmentary politics. There seems to be a lot of weight behind the argument that constitutional-legal provisions have been a factor in the mobilisation of ethnic demands for separate geo-political space within the Indian Union and in some cases these demands have also been backed up by different degrees of violence. Yet it would perhaps be stretching the argument a bit too far if one holds the country's constitutional-legal provisions of bearing primary responsibility for "the persistence of ethnic militancy in north-eastern India". For instance, the type of ethnic militancy spawned by organisations like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland[I-M] (NSCN(I-M)), the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), not to speak of the different militant groups operating in Manipur, have little to do with the protective provisions of the Constitution. On the contrary, the Naga struggle under the Phizo-led Naga National Council began by rejecting the Sixth Schedule status for the then Naga Hills district of Assam.

While trying to explain the armed conflicts of the north-eastern region, Baruah stresses factors like the nature and politics of weak states and of agency above structural conditions which alone, he feels, do not necessarily lead to armed civil conflicts. He maintains

¹ Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution of India give the union government unfettered right to alter the boundaries of any state, create new ones and even do away with existing ones. While in the case of the other states, the resolution of the state assembly regarding reorganisation is not binding on the centre, in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, this is not the case. Any move to alter the boundaries of JandK would have to be approved by the JandK assembly by a two-thirds majority

that it is not merely societal actors that may be involved in the construction of the discourse of violence, the national security anxiety of state managers can, for instance, shape the discourse that emphasises military solutions to armed conflicts. When such a discourse trumps over one that emphasises political solutions, it can itself become a factor in the resilience of armed conflicts. Baruah concludes by saying that as long as governmental policy is determined by “a crudely developmentalist and national security mindset”, there is little chance of ensuring a durable peace in the northeastern region. It is possible to agree with much of this, and share Baruah’s contention that the intersection of democratic politics and insurgency has created a complex scenario in the north-east where the legitimacy of elected governments and the very base of democratic politics have been seriously undermined, thereby giving rise to a frightening human rights situation. However, one would still like to maintain that, notwithstanding all its shortcomings, the Indian nation state is passing through a sort of learning experience in the north-east – an experience that has involved the widening of the parameters of nation and nation state to include small nationalities who were outside the ambit of the anti-colonial freedom struggle and who have been refusing to see themselves as Indians. It is a separate matter though that this experience of the Indian nation state has not been a voluntary one but has been brought about at great human cost, both by the resilience of some of the major militant ethnic struggles of the region as well as the accommodative power of the Indian Constitution. The first section of the volume, “Stalemated Conflicts: What Costs?” opens with an essay by Ananya Vajpeyi which focuses on the particular form of protest on 15 July 2004 by a group of Manipuri women in front of the Kangla Fort headquarters of the Assam Rifles following the abduction, rape and murder of Thangjam Manorama by the security forces. Vajpeyi’s piece entitled “Resenting the Indian State” makes interesting reading as the author plays with the different nuances of the terms “resentment” and “satyagraha”. Vajpeyi discusses the brutal force of the Indian state and shows how the naked protest of the women of Manipur highlighted the totally vulnerable condition of the citizens in a region ruled by a whole set of oppressive laws, including the notorious Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) of 1958. Vajpeyi is struck by the “brilliance” of the protest and says that in the banners that the women held

There is no demand for justice... they are not slogans but only statements... I don't think the women meant to either resist or retaliate, nor were they seeking to avenge Manorama's killing. What was happening in Kangla, Imphal, on 15 July 2004, was not passive resistance but active resentment.

However, the author's engagement with the *form* of the protest which she refers to as a "semiotic masterstroke" and her useful theoretical and philosophical deductions about it could actually deflect attention from the fact that this was essentially a collective political statement in the overall tradition of such protests in Manipur. The finer nuances of whether the protest was an expression of "passive resistance" or "active resentment" or "political emotion" tend to become muddled in a situation where the common citizens of Manipur are fighting almost every day in some form or other against the continuous violation of human rights both by the state and by militant groups. To many, therefore, it is the intensity of the protest rather than its "originality" that would continue to hold relevance in the context of all such situations where democracy and the rule of law remain virtually suspended and citizen's rights made a mockery under a plethora of repressive laws.

The second essay in this section by Bodhisattva Kar entitled "When Was the Post-Colonial?" stands out for its clarity of persuasiveness and thorough use of archival material. Saying that the "Inner Line was not only a territorial exterior of the theatre of capital – it was also a temporal outside of the historical pace of development and progress", Kar proceeds to show the Line was repeatedly redrawn well into the second decade of the 20th century to accommodate "the expansive compulsions of plantation capital, the recognition of imperfection of survey maps, the security anxiety of the state, and the adaptive practices of internally differentiated local communities". Arguing that nothing much is to be gained by prioritising the "region" over the "nation", Kar says "if the security anxiety and hardening of borders is a legacy of the colonial state, so is the urge to open the borders to capital and labour flows". He concludes by saying that terms like "connectivity", "integration into the world economy" and of the north-eastern region acting as an "important land bridge" actually are not new ideas at all. They are just "the newest relics of the oldest capitalist speculations in the north-eastern frontier". All this appears quite convincing, especially when one takes into consideration the apprehensions and fears of

the small border communities about opening up without proper safeguards.

Negotiating Nationalism

The second part of the collection, "Nation and Its Discontents", contains three pieces by Dolly Kikon, Rakhee Kalita and Nandana Dutta. Kikon tries to show "how the colonial representation of the Naga people tries to find its way into modern national imaginations in post-colonial India". The author argues that the stereotyping of ethnic communities like the Nagas is the result of their unstable political relationship with the post-colonial nation. The author refers to the stereotypical display of models of tribes from the north-eastern region in the National Museum of Kolkata and tries to relate this to the Naga's actual experience while trying to seek admission to the museum when she is taken for a foreigner and has to prove her identity as an Indian citizen. The display within the museum and the reality outside coalesce in an eerie manner and Kikon says that this only shows how insecure the small nationalities are in the Indian nation state. Rakhee Kalita tries to chart the difficult to-define relationship of Assamese society with the militants belonging to ULFA. She does this through a study of three contemporary Assamese creative texts which deal with different aspects of ULFA's presence and activities in Assam, its initial idealism nourished by strong socio-historical roots and its gradual degeneration into an outfit without any ideological moorings. Agreeing that the organisation's influence has dwindled over time, the author maintains that "few in Assam believe that the Ulfa's present predicament is entirely of its own making". It is this involvement with the ULFA's cause, Rakhee says, that has resulted in a large body of writing centred on this organisation. Through her pithy analysis of the texts, Rakhee tries to construct a "situated knowledge of terrorism in Assam" and shows how, notwithstanding all its aberrations, the ULFA has, in several ways, always been a part the Assamese national imagination. Therefore, she asks the question: Whose terrorists are these anyway? Nandana Dutta's piece suggests the need to move out of the "narrative of neglect" into newer narratives that are emerging in the north-east. She discerns this shift in "two large policy changes" which deal with the "look East" policy of the Indian government and its new emphasis on tourism. Dutta

says that “transnationalism and multiple identities may provide an under structure that a new discourse of the northeast might build on”. This, she maintains, would involve a new conception of borders as well as a certain degree of comfort with multiple identities. However, many might have reservations about Dutta’s espousal of the new narrative components such as the look East policy and the national tourism policy which she views as signifying a change in the approach to the northeast by the Indian state and a possible shift in the self-construction of the region.

Shifting Lines of the Nation

The third part of the volume deals with “Discourses of Inclusion and Exclusion”. Easily one of the more perceptive essays in this section is the one by Pradip Phanjoubam. He makes his position clear in the first line itself when he says:

Much of the problem in the north-east has been, among others, the inability to strike objective visions of the changing world and the inadequacy of the responses to the ever merging and renewing reality.

Saying that the contexts of struggle in the north-east are ever changing, Pradip stresses the need for the scriptwriters of ideologies and ideological wars to reassess their own thought processes. He makes an important point when he says that the “colonising” nation, against which struggles of freedom are launched, may not, in the present context, be the same nation any longer and, in that case, there is the danger of the militant struggles being caught in the time warp.

Need for North-East Perspective

Blaming the intelligentsia of the region for having failed to work out an active discourse on what really defines development, Phanjoubam discusses how the Radcliffe line altered the face and psychology of the entire north-eastern region by making it a landlocked area. Arguing that the look east policy cannot be imposed by New Delhi but, rather, must have its own north-east perspective, Phanjoubam says; “It is not just about trade and commerce and economic gain. It is about ventilating a psychology of claustrophobia

by opening up the north-east to what is its natural surroundings." Critiquing New Delhi's position of trying to manage the conflict situation in the north-east and not to solve it, Pradip Phanjoubam says that such a "strategy of managing conflicts is ultimately transformed into a trap", with the conflicts swiftly turning into an end in them. Bhagat Oinam in his quest for a "Cohesive Northeast" deals with the very relevant issue of diverse discourses within the different militant groups of the region. These discourses are "inherently antagonistic and hostile and above all, refuse to be self critical and self-reflective". Nothing could perhaps be more pertinent to the present situation in the north-east where almost every ethnic community has been claiming nationhood and a geographical space of their own, thereby triggering an almost unending chain of violent conflicts. Arguing for a cohesive and comprehensive narrative of the north-east, Oinam believes that in making this happen the Indian state has a positive role to play. Makiko Kimura's essay on the infamous Nellie massacre of February 1983 lays bare the different factors which fuelled the incident. Basing her findings on extensive fieldwork, Kimura shows how factors like immigration and the alienation of land combined with rumours about the possibility of an attack eventually pushed the Tiwas to a state of confrontation with their immigrant Muslim neighbours, even though the latter were not recent settlers. She traces the history of the gradual occupation by the immigrants of the Tribal Belts and Blocks and the loss of the traditional land of the tribal people. The author shows how the Assam Movement highlighted the issue of occupation of tribal land by the immigrants and the threat to their identity and, as the controversial elections of February 1983 approached, Tiwa village elders fed by stories of kidnapping and assault of tribal people by the Muslims, decided to attack Nellie. Kimura stresses the need "to listen to the complicated and competing narratives and the fragmented accounts of the villagers" in trying to understand an event like the one at Nellie which had far reaching consequences on the entire process of Assamese nationality formation.

The fourth section contains three essays by M Sajjad Hussain, Samir Kumar Das and H Kham Khan Suan. While Hussain reflects on the Mizo Peace Accord and ascribes its success to factors which stretch back to the colonial times, Samir Das writes about the changing nature of the peace policy pursued by the Indian state towards the insurgent groups of the northeast. Focusing primarily

on the government's peace negotiations with the Nagas, the author shows how, over the years, the idea of "indivisible sovereignty" has undergone a change. Similarly, the position on sovereignty of organisations like the NSCN also seemed to have changed. Das attributes this change not to the accommodative power of the Indian Constitution but to the "strength of the negotiating parties". But what is important is that there is a clear move away from military to political solutions as far as the Naga issue is concerned and the change in the Indian government's position is revealed in the very agenda of the talks. Moreover, Das himself mentions the difficulties of the dialogic process because of the fault lines within the insurgent groups and the factional struggles that have been going on in Nagaland where even if an agreement were to be reached between the government and the NSCN(I-M) it may not be acceptable to the other factions of the Naga movement.

Kham Khan Suan's piece on the divide between the hills and the valley in Manipur stresses that "all socio-economic, cultural and political development and non developmental trajectories are seen through the prism of this divide". Arguing against a common cultural policy that would result in homogenising the diverse and heterogeneous ethnic communities, the author stresses the need for a "look beyond the Westminster model of democracy and a willingness to craft institutions outside the existing constitutional framework which will envision expansive sharing of powers". This, to say the least, is a highly debatable issue since it would deal with the increasing role of traditional institutions in a representative democracy. Betsy Taylor too, in her essay in the concluding part of the volume, suggests in relation to Arunachal Pradesh that, instead of being tied to "deeply Western biased" understandings of civic life, one should try to look for "openings for civic space within existing local publics as they actually are".

Centrality of Land

The concluding part of the volume is taken up by the writings of Subir Bhowmick, Betsy Taylor and Bethany Lacia. Subir Bhowmick traces the roots of tribal conflict in Tripura to the continuous alienation of tribal land through transfers to Bengali settlers as also because of the construction of large dams like the Gumti hydel project. Bhowmick suggests that in order to send the right message

to the state's indigenes who have been heavily outnumbered by the settlers, one way would be to decommission the Gumti project and also initiate measures to return lost land to the indigenous tribal people. He also suggests that 50 percent reservation in the legislature should be made available for the tribal population so that they do not completely lose out on political control of their homeland. In the concluding essay of the volume Bethany Lucia rightly argues that the challenges in the north-east cannot be met by counter-insurgency measures or by trying to win hearts and minds by pumping in money. This would depend on "promoting a system of governance and security that is based on the rule of law and that, therefore, would provide a lasting protection against violence from any source". But the question is how this can be brought about in a situation where the State has long abdicated its responsibility of ensuring distributive justice and the rule of law for its citizens and has, instead, tried to keep its hold on the region through the blanket use of draconian laws.

In conclusion, one might say that the volume edited by Sanjeeb Baruah has successfully highlighted several of the core issues thrown up by the insurgent movements of the north-eastern region. It bears evidence of the editor's involvement in the north-east and his commitment to finding a way out of the present scenario dominated by a counter-insurgency-developmental syndrome. It is significant that, while most of the essays have dealt with the failure of government policy and approaches in tackling insurgency, there are only two pieces which have attempted to highlight the connection between insurgent politics, immigration and the land factor. It needs no reiteration that issues of land and territoriality have assumed frightening dimensions of late and have triggered a human tragedy of large proportions in several areas of the north-east. The continuing violence in Assam's Karbi Anglong district, where ethnic communities who have lived in peace and amity for centuries are now pitted against one another, is evidence of the explosive nature of the land question. Land has turned out to be a highly contentious issue in the entire north-east, with ethnic violence of recent times being inextricably linked with it. Therefore, the volume would have gained much had there been an attempt to seriously address the issue of land and territoriality. Also, except for one essay, the volume is largely silent on the growing faultlines within the militant organisations and the rising incidence of factional killings, all of

which have certainly made the road to a negotiated peace even more difficult. Finally, though the volume as a whole has expressed itself unambiguously against draconian laws like the AFSPA and a military solution of the insurgency issue in the north-east, one would have been happy to see the inclusion of a serious discussion on the human rights scenario in the volume, especially with state-sponsored killings and militant attacks on civilians taking on menacing proportions in states like Assam and Manipur. For, can one really envisage a move beyond counter-insurgency without seriously addressing these issues?