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Books Reviewed

Chakraborty, D., Majumdar, R. and Sartori, A., eds (2007). *From the Colonial to the Post-Colonial: India and Pakistan in Transition*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Frey, Karsten (2006). *India's Nuclear Bomb and National Security*. London: Routledge.

Guha, Ramchandra (2007). *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*. London: Macmillan.

Kapur, Devesh and Mehta, Pratap Bhanu (2005). *Public Institutions in India: Performance and Design*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mukherji, Rahul, ed. (2007). *India's Economic Transition: The Politics of Reforms*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Sen, Amartya (2006). *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. London: Allen Lane.

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The Puzzle

Is democracy a moveable feast, capable of spreading beyond its native land in the liberal-democratic West? This article asks this comparative question in the context of an area (India) through a general argument, and in the form of a literature review based on six books. The conjecture that connects them suggests that more than social capital,[1] it is *democratic capital* (modern political institutions, electoral processes, strategic reform of the social and economic structure, and accountability) that leads to democratic transition in postcolonial societies.[2] In its

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classical form, the main argument of social capital holds that cultural attributes such as trust, social networks, and shared norms at the local level trickle up to the top of the political system, which makes democracy work. This is true of the historical evolution of liberal democracy in western states, where society and institutions have gone through continuous evolution as a result of larger economic and constitutional changes. In the postcolonial context, traditional society (with castes, religions, tribes, and linguistic groups which have remained relatively unchanged over centuries) was catapulted suddenly into the modern world under the aegis of modern political institutions. In this case, the political system more than the social structure became the main agent of change.

This article, which asserts the salience of democratic over social capital, is addressed to a mixed audience of area specialists and comparativists. The books reviewed here analyze the different aspects of democratic capital (the evolutionary path of institutions, institutional design, social and economic reform, and policies geared toward the protection of identity and security) at work. They help identify area-specific facts that might enrich comparative, cross-regional models of the transition to democracy. When modern institutions and political processes combine to contest the dominance of hereditary social notables, they play a catalytic role in the institutionalization of free and fair elections and of respect for freedom of choice. These, in turn, provide conditions for liberal democracy. South Asia, with India as its microcosm, is the site of these six narratives, each telling part of the story.

The six texts have been chosen for their ability to represent factors that make democracy work. They focus on the ability of elites to connect premodern values and modern norms in the creation of postcolonial institutions, to balance authority with accountability, and to design a modern, inclusive political system.[3] Chakraborty, Majumdar and Sartori, based on a comparison of India and Pakistan, analyze the uncertain course of societies emerging from colonial rule. In *Identity and Violence*, Amartya Sen (the Nobel-Prize-winning economist, celebrated moral philosopher, and public intellectual) considers the dilemmas for individuals caught between the contrary pulls of an all-embracing single identity on the one hand and the multiplicity of loyalties and obligations that contribute to the richness of life on the other. Sen's assertion that individual choice is crucial to sustain democracy prepares the terrain for Kapur and Mehta, who scrutinize the design and inner dynamics of India's public institutions. Modern institutions, the steady workhorses of democracy, are intermediaries between the state and society, painstakingly processing the conflicting demands of individuals in a complex society. Mukherji's text adds the logic of material welfare and strategic reform, which reinforce the institutional arrangement of India's democracy. Frey analyzes the triangular relationship between security, identity, and democracy with special reference to India's nuclear tests. On the basis of an analysis of elite discourse and the process of decision-making, he comes to the conclusion that the "Hindu" bomb is essentially a democratic "Indian" bomb. The final text, an omnibus history of India after Independence by Ramchandra Guha, provides a meeting point for the specific arguments emerging from diverse disciplines such as postcolonial studies, comparative politics, political economy, and international relations and security.

India Unbound? The Postcolonial State and the Dilemma of Democratic Order

The capacity of non-western cultures to sustain democratic rule has generated continuing debate stretching across many generations of scholars (Ganguly et al., 2007; Lijphart, 1996). Those who despair of the case for democracy in Iraq, Afghanistan, or China might find cause to cheer in the contemporary politics of South Asia. Indeed, these are heady days for electoral democracy in this region.[4] The 2004 parliamentary polls in India saw a reversal in the fortunes of the Hindu-nationalist-dominated National Democratic Alliance (NDA), whose cultural policy had caused concern among some western liberal democrats, and brought the center-left United Progressive Alliance (UPA) to power. Since then, the two broad-based coalitions have stayed their course and have now restarted their electoral campaigns for the next general election, expected in 2009.

The most significant fact about the relative success of electoral democracy in India is that it is homegrown. There have been no external military interventions to help democracy along as in Eastern Europe in recent times or in Germany and Japan during the Second World War. In contrast, Indian elections have gone ahead pretty much under their own steam, monitored by the national Election Commission and reported on and watched over by the national media. These largely well-attended elections have regularly witnessed political parties, rebels, religious and ethnic groups, and hordes of independent candidates joining in the fray.

Why India, compared to other non-western societies, has managed to make democratic institutions work is a puzzle ripe enough to attract the attention of party theorists and electoral analysts, and to pit students of political anthropology against those of comparative politics. The "democratic" credential of India is an issue of lively debate within South Asian area studies.[5] The comparative issue refers to the underlying causality. Is it best explained by region-specific factors, such as culture (a traditional accommodation of diversity) and path dependency contingent on the historical context (the peaceful transfer of power by the departing British colonial rulers compared with revolutionary change in Africa and South-East Asia), or by general factors, such as elite agency, institutional arrangements, and a two-track political process that combines institutional participation with rational protest?[6]

The success of democracy in South Asia is mixed. The confirmed liberal democrat finds much in this region to deplore. Five nuclear tests in the Rajasthan deserts of India in 1998 rapidly set off a chain reaction of six tests in the Chagai hills of Pakistan, which took both states out of the limbo of nuclear "threshold" countries. These tests, following the refusal of India and Pakistan to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which both nations viewed as discriminatory, sent waves of anxiety across the world. India had already achieved another breakthrough in 1991, referred to in India as the "liberalization" of the economy from bureaucratic control. This set India's moribund economy on the path to unprecedented and sustained growth, but also to rising inequality. India now has the double distinction of being home to the largest number of the richest (dollar billionaires) as well as the poorest (living on less than a dollar per day) in the world.[7] In addition to liberalization of the economy, and the nuclear bomb,

there was a third development that democrats all over the world registered with great concern. The destruction of the Babri Mosque on December 6, 1992, followed 10 years later by the Gujarat riots implicating the state machinery in a well-organized pogrom against Muslims, indicated a growing assertiveness of the advocates of *hindutva* – the demand for greater recognition of Hindu values in India's modern institutions.

The gap between the liberal-democratic norms of the constitution and the reality on the ground is not unique to India.[8] Some of these ambiguities are best seen in the contortions and contradictions of recent Indian policy. Postcolonial India's political leadership under Jawaharlal Nehru had sought legitimacy in the policy of peace, nuclear disarmament, and the empowerment of politically marginal groups through constitutional means. Nehru had projected these goals, conceptualized as *panchasheela*, as the basis of the nonalignment movement, which he thought would give voice and identity to postcolonial states emerging out of colonial rule. Nehru's model of social democracy had a linear continuity with those ideas emerging out of India's struggle for independence under the banner of the Indian National Congress. The movement, under the inspiration of Gandhian ideals, had questioned the legitimacy of colonial rule and social hierarchy and sought representation for dissident voices within the structure of the political system of colonial India. This involved a certain degree of collaboration between British colonial rule and Congress to keep the opponents of liberal democracy (radical revolutionaries and advocates of Hindu nationalism) out of the political arena, and of competition for the support of "minorities" (the Muslims and untouchable groups), endowing them with a sense of pivotal power.

In retrospect, Congress policy had internalized the Whig view of progress, adapting it to Indian conditions, but without the complement of embedded Tory social and religious values which gave British liberalism its legitimacy at home. In India, conservative opinion (religious, social, and cultural) stayed firmly outside the ambit of formal Congress manifestos. In the event, following Independence, as the Congress Party transformed the legacy of anticolonial struggle into electoral power, its policy of modernization based on social democracy started unraveling rapidly under the impact of the political mobilization of those social groups excluded from Congress during colonial rule and marginal social groups that were never a part of it in the first place. Decline of support at home matched the decline of support for India's policy of nonalignment internationally with the end of the Cold War. Nehru's India, like Prometheus, "had a passionate ambition to be the equal of the gods" (Comte, 1991: 168) in competing against the West on the basis of secularism, democracy, and nonalignment. The nadir came in 1962 when China dealt a humiliating blow to Nehru's India in the border war.

The later years of Nehru's India, particularly the traumatic aftermath to the debacle of the 1962 border war, are best imagined in a Promethean mode.[9] Once seen as the pioneer in giving the Third World a voice and an identity through the political values of democracy, long a preserve of the West, Nehru, following the debacle at the hands of communist China, was a fallen angel: moribund and pilloried by Pakistan, China, and the democratic West for not living up to the high standards of morality in international politics that he had advocated on the issue of Kashmir, his failure to feed his own people as famine ravaged parts of the country, and for the inability of his government to provide security and dignity to the Muslim minority in the face of vicious communal riots.

The course of postcolonial politics comes up with unexpected turns, and frequently, the demotion of secular democracy in favor of cultural nationalism. In India, many saw in the electoral victory of the upper-caste-dominated Hindu-nationalist BJP in 1998 a resurgent India, a Prometheus "unbound." The policies of this new India attempted to regain the initiative internationally through the nuclear tests and domestically through the return of the upper social strata to government. The books reviewed in this article provide windows onto this world in transition and turmoil. The section that follows will summarize their main arguments in terms of their connectivity to the core question of this review article.

The Uncertain Transition: From the Colonial to the Postcolonial

The transition from colonial rule to postcolonial democracy, marked in the case of South Asia by a peaceful and orderly transfer of power to the new rulers, has had a more complex itinerary compared to western nation-states. Postcolonial regimes, in the face of flagging charisma or the passing away of the generation of leaders identified with the myth of the freedom struggle, have often had recourse to authoritarian methods in order to retain power. However, as seen from the contrasting cases of India and Pakistan, there is considerable diversity in the courses that postcolonial regimes may take. *From the Colonial to the Post-Colonial: India and Pakistan in Transition*, whose editorial team includes indigenous scholars from South Asia as well as nonindigenous experts of the region, offers a succinct explanation of this puzzle by reaching back into colonial rule and beyond it, to the premodern roots of modern politics. The book brings together a range of distinguished scholars who negotiate the issue of decolonization in different, though mutually reinforcing ways, through constitutionalism, law, sports, regionalism, housing, gender, minority issues, Dalit (former "untouchables") and mass politics, and class formation. The authors have done away with the unwritten convention in which historical analysis of South Asian politics tends to terminate with the departure of the British rulers in 1947, which is when political scientists typically begin their analysis of the state, nation, citizenship, and other aspects of postcolonial politics. This perverse division of labor between history and political science has brought self-imposed limitations to historical analysis, and to political science. Cut off from reference points in the premodern past and the strategic reuse of Indian tradition within the structure of governance of colonial rule, the political science of postcolonial India has not had the intellectual and material means to examine the postindependence issues of identity, anxiety, and memory as legitimate concerns of politics, profiling them instead merely as the last bastions of conservative reaction and underdevelopment.

By successfully linking contemporary politics to its path dependency on colonial and precolonial history, the authors of this volume have generated a set of valuable essays. Of these, the following are particularly significant for the core argument of this review article. These are Uday Mehta's "Indian Constitutionalism: The Articulation of a Vision," Dipesh Chakraborty's "Democracy and the Power of the Multitudes," David Gilmartin's "Election, Law and the People in Colonial and Postcolonial India," "Family Values in Transition: Debates around the Hindu Code Bill" by Rochona Majumdar, and "Towards a History of the Present: Southern Perspectives on the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" by David Washbrook. With these essays the book establishes a grid based on ideas, disciplines, and

geographical and cultural space with which to examine the political evolution of India and Pakistan, and to understand the resilience of India's political system compared with the fragility of the political systems of its neighbors through comparative analysis. Overall, this is a useful volume that provides students of South Asian politics, economic growth and distribution, and colonial history and postcolonial studies with new comparative insights.

Is Non-Western Democracy a Liberal Illusion? South Asian Politics and the Public Intellectual

In postcolonial and post-communist societies in which power is peacefully transferred by departing rulers to new elites, the battle for democracy usually comes after victory has been declared. Sen's *Identity and Violence* is a succinct analysis of how this might happen when a democratic majority, armed with a single identity, turns on a minority. Democracy's success, Sen argues, is contingent on its ability to protect the right to multiple identities from the "solitarist approach" (Sen: xii) which conceptualizes identity only in terms of "singularity." Identity, Sen suggests, is a multiple attribute, rather than being one single and overriding trait. In a revealing passage, he describes himself as

> an Asian, an Indian citizen, a Bengali with Bangladeshi ancestry, an American or British resident, an economist, a dabbler in philosophy, an author, a Sanskritist, a strong believer in secularism and democracy, a man, a feminist, a heterosexual, a defender of gay and lesbian rights, with a nonreligious lifestyle, from a Hindu background, a non-Brahmin, and a non-believer in an afterlife (and also, in case the question is asked, a non-believer in a "before-life" as well). (Sen: 19)

In everyday life, the temptation to have just one identity dupes many. Sen, the crusading liberal and public intellectual, has made it his business here to help them out of their illusion, which the moral philosopher in him defines more rigorously as "conceptual disarray" (Sen: xiv, 165). This, he asserts, is the biggest threat to liberal democracy in India. Sen, the world citizen and free-floating intellectual, would like to extend this "mix and match" approach to multiple identities, whereby individuals carry a stack of identity cards and can choose the one that they wish to show depending on the context.

> Is this project to universalise liberal values merely a liberal illusion? The reception accorded the book among area specialists has been predictably mixed. An Asian columnist commented wryly on "the author's exquisite concern for everyone's personal feelings and his desire to make large-hearted accommodation for every political and social bent – except, notably, the religious and nationalist kind," likely to be solitarists. (Varadarajan, 2006)[10]

Others have been harsher, taking Sen to task for being soft on Muslim minorities in the West whose support for secular democracy is merely tactical, because the very same people turn out to be quite solitarist (in Sen's terminology) when it comes to decisions about the social and moral lives of their own communities. Other commentators were intuitively supportive of Sen's criticism of Samuel Huntington. Sen takes Huntington to task for presenting the solitarist view, the

"alleged" (Sen: 46) clash of civilizations, as a fact of political life. Some have nevertheless questioned Sen's method. One of them writes:

> For all its urbanity, however, "Identity and Violence" neglects what others will take to be common sense. Hutus and Tutsis will not lay down arms because they are told they are Kigalians, laborers or human beings. Sunnis and Shiites will not be coaxed into a group hug by a reminder of the religion and cultural attributes they share. The strength of Sen's argument lies in its intuitive nature: "In our normal lives we see ourselves as members of a variety of groups." Its weakness lies in its failure to explain why, at critical junctures, we disown that knowledge. Is it because human cognition tends to trade in binaries? Is it because violence creates identity as much as identity creates violence? Is it because human beings fear the choices or [the] solitude [that] a more cosmopolitan outlook would force them to face? These and other possibilities go unexamined. (Yoshino, 2006)

In drawing on his personal memory as "empirical" evidence and in his epistemological inflexibility, for example his argument that the dupes of crude solitarist propaganda lack the mental agility to see through their illusions (Sen: 175), Amartya Sen, the famously "Argumentative Indian" (Sen, 2005), appears to have turned his back on the rigorous rules of logic and scientific inference that paved his way to the Nobel Prize for economics and a string of honors from the best-known universities in the world. Is it really possible to pin the blame for all sectarian, communal, and nationalist violence one witnesses today merely on the inability of people to perceive the multiple identities of others, or of themselves? There is a deeper methodological point to the polemical tone of this critique of Sen's position as simplistic and reductionist. Perceptions, like revealed preferences, are but the visible tips of larger underlying structures of tangible, real-life processes and memories which call for a research agenda dedicated to this problem.[11] But those who allege that Sen's "idealistic thesis twists and turns to remake the world in its own image" (Varadarajan, 2006: n. 10) miss two vital points of the book.

First, in *Identity and Violence*, Sen restates the core of the liberal enlightenment worldview, with its belief in the universality of human nature and in the inherent ability of all peoples to transcend their cultures and their histories. In his analysis of Gandhi's enormous influence on Indian politics as evidence of the plurality of identity in India (Sen: 165–6), he paves the way toward liberal democracy for any society whose leaders are able to map premodern values onto inclusive modern institutions and, generally, reuse the past in the service of the present.

Second, the tone of advocacy of this book is that of the public intellectual and not the economist. It is a conscious choice. True, in the rarefied universe of analytical logic, empirical rigor, and the detached style of the graduate schools of political science, a tone of advocacy comes across as an embarrassment; but what would the political world of South Asia be without its public intellectuals and activists giving voice to the powerless, adding meaning to the structure and function of India's public institutions, and legitimacy to the system? We shall return later to the vital importance of public intellectuals in their role as social catalysts, stinging the state and society into action and showing the

way to liberal democracy in South Asia, in the discussion of Guha's *India After Gandhi*, below.

Political Institutions and the Public Sphere

While politics in any form is a game in which the players seek to maximize their shares, what distinguishes liberal democracy from its rivals is the conviction of the bulk of the population that differences are legitimate, the rules are not stacked against them, and the game is played on a level playing field that gives each actor a fair chance. Besides, for the losers as much as for the winners, there is always the next game to prepare for. The Indian state, through a combination of liberal institutions, social and economic reform, and policies of positive discrimination, has succeeded in creating a "level playing field" (Mitra, 2008b).[12] Thus, the state secures legitimacy and carries out its tasks of governance and development through a diverse range of institutions. The rich array of authors brought together in Kapur and Mehta's *Public Institutions in India: Performance and Design* represents the growing genre of academic projects in South Asia that draw on native scholars, the Indian diaspora, area specialists, and practitioners from the real world of politics and administration. It assesses the design, performance, and adaptability of the principal institutions of governance in India and their critical role in the creation and sustenance of a democratic political process.

The volume analyzes the institutional arrangement of India through essays on the parliament (Arun Agrawal), presidency (James Manor), institutions of internal accountability (S.K. Das), judiciary (Pratap Bhanu Mehta), police (Arvind Verma), and the civil service (K.P. Krishnan and T.V. Somanathan). Further chapters concerning those economic institutions crucial to reform (see the section on economic citizenship below), such as the Reserve Bank of India (Deena Khatkhate), as well as regulatory bodies (Sugata Bhattacharya and Urjit Patel) and federal institutions (M. Govinda Rao and Nirvikar Singh) help provide a deeper insight into the functioning of political institutions. In addition to discussing their constitutional design and evolution, the articles pay special attention to their relative autonomy, accountability, and the empirical information they possess about the society in which they are ensconced. Also included are essays that explore the critical role played by institutions in enhancing economic performance, strengthening federalism, and deepening the democratic impulse in India. These look at how electoral uncertainty has given a new lease of life to watchdog bodies such as the Election Commission and the Supreme Court. Finally, the volume looks at the variations in the institutional performance of the Indian state across time, and evaluates if the state has the capacity to adapt to a changing environment.

The ability of the institutional structure to generate endogenous innovations in order to respond to larger problems external to the institutional structure is of special significance. The Supreme Court has striven to protect the rule of law from arbitrary power (Pratap Bhanu Mehta in Kapur and Mehta). It has, in addition, evolved the doctrine of "basic structure" to protect basic freedoms from the executive and from legislative majorities, not to maim the principles of parliamentary sovereignty so much as to produce space for deeper deliberation about matters that are vital for democratic rule through "delicate political balancing" (Kapur and Mehta: 170). Yet another innovation is Public Interest Litigation

(PIL) – a doctrine that facilitates the access of ordinary citizens to the Supreme Court and High Courts and on some occasions, even direct policy initiatives by the judges of the Supreme Court on issues such as the environment, slum dwellers, or safeguarding the lives and dignity of women (Kapur and Mehta: 167). Providing detailed and original insights into the working of institutions and assessing the manner in which they assist, strengthen, thwart, manipulate, and subvert each other, this rich collection of essays is a valuable addition to the comparative politics of institutions and functions.

Admirable though their analysis of the internal dynamics of institutions and their benign role in protecting the welfare of citizens is, Kapur and Mehta do not reverse their gaze, and get citizens to evaluate these institutions. The results of the measurement of popular trust in India's institutions by means of a public opinion survey raise serious issues regarding trust in India's public institutions. In an analysis of public opinion on the basis of a national sample of the Indian electorate conducted in 1996 (Mitra and Singh, 1999: 260), it was found that 45.9 percent of Indians had a high level of trust in the Election Commission and 41.6 percent had equivalent trust in the judiciary. Trust in implementing institutions as compared to regulators turned out to be lower. Local, state, and central government (the three levels of government in India) elicited a "great deal of trust" among 39.0 percent, 37.2 percent, and 35.2 percent, respectively. Elected representatives, political parties, government officials, and the police (four institutions forming the pillars of everyday political life) ranked the lowest, with 19.9 percent, 17.4 percent, 17.2 percent, and 13.0 percent, respectively, having a "great deal of trust" in these.

Judging from the above, Indians tend to trust institutions more than actors, and among institutions, regulatory institutions are favored over those responsible for policymaking and implementation. That leads to a paradoxical situation. Low trust in members of legislative bodies, parties, and civil servants results from rampant corruption and criminality. On the other hand, because of low trust, these institutions, as a rule, rarely get the benefit of the doubt from citizens. Small differences quickly take on large proportions: the work of the parliament is held up because of specific political differences and in elections Indians appear consistently to "vote against" (such is the frequency of turnover in office) rather than to "vote for." This is further grist to the mill of the skeptics, who argue that India might have the formal trappings of a parliament, but that it does not quite resemble the real thing. The next section analyzes a similar problem with regard to economic reform and its implementation.

Economic Citizenship: The Dilemma of Democratic Reform

A brief perusal of the Indian media shows that the democratic "costs" of the liberalization of the economy and globalization are making their way into public debate as India approaches its next general election, expected in 2009. Radical measures taken by the government of India, which include a massive aid package, have not thwarted farmers' suicides.[13] Joint protest against the rise in consumer prices by the opposition NDA coalition and the Left Front, whose support of the UPA government from "outside" was crucial for its continuation in office, has occasionally stalled the normal transaction of business by the Indian parliament. In the light of these developments, one is entitled to ask how sustainable India's reforms are, in view of the democratic retribution that they are already causing.

The negative consequences of structural reform with regard to the chances of those responsible for them in getting re-elected are well known and were given theoretical shape by Barrington Moore in his chapter on "Democracy in Asia: India and the Price of Peaceful Change" in the magisterial *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Moore, 1966), a book that shaped the analytical perspective of a whole generation of specialists on India's political economy. Rahul Mukherji's excellent volume on *India's Economic Transition: The Politics of Reforms* (perhaps the best collection of essays on the subject currently available to students of Indian politics) provides valuable insights into this particular democratic dilemma. It also provides insights for students of collective violence about why mass discontent does not always spill over into revolution. It reveals how democratic political economies gradually build a political consensus regarding changes in economic institutions – a process that is fraught with conflicts among interest groups. A systematic study of evolutionary change in India reveals that this nation can neither demolish the market nor reinvent it as easily as China. Nor does India have to contend with famines or revolutions: even though evolutionary processes are messy, they are also less disruptive.[14]

The essays brought together in this volume shed light on the politics that produced the Indian economic reforms following 1991, when India faced its most severe balance of payments crisis since Independence. The editorial introduction analyzes the politics that shaped economic policy during three broad phases: from Independence to 1968, between 1969 and 1974, and the period after 1975, leading to the balance of payments crisis of 1991. Salient questions as to what the economic reforms undertaken after 1991 were, why they occurred, how they were sustained, and what impact the economic reforms had on India's political economy are answered by a stellar cast of authors that includes some of the best names in the field, such as Jagdish Bhagwati, Prabhat Patnaik and C.P. Chandrasekhar, Montek Ahluwalia, Ashutosh Varshney, Rob Jenkins, Baldev Raj Nayar, Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, Jason Kirk, John Echeverri-Gent, Ann Lee Saxenian, Supriya Roy Chowdhury, and Stanley Kochanek. In addition, the book includes significant features of the post-reform political economy, for example the growing importance of Indian federalism; a new politics of regulation governing markets in areas such as telecommunications, power, and stock exchanges; industrial lobbying; trade union activism; and the curious mix of benefits and costs associated with the rise of India's IT sector.

The excellent range of essays included in this volume will provide helpful insights for non-area specialists looking for comparable material on South Asia. The one essay that refers directly to the paradox of democratic reform is one on the difficult issue of labor market reforms by Supriya Roy Chowdhury (entitled "Public Sector Restructuring and Democracy: The State, Labour and Trade Unions in India"). The author refers to the "popular impression that public sector enterprises – given their public ownership, welfare concerns and powerful unions accustomed to a patron–client relationship with the state – would be highly resistant to change in matters affecting labour" (Mukherji: 391). However, the author shows on the basis of detailed fieldwork on three public-sector enterprises that "significant labour rationalisation" did indeed take place in them, and "with trade union support." These results were possible because of a number of factors, including a change of attitude on the part of workers (searching for

the best conditions for work and promotion rather than merely security), transparency and the sharing of information (letting workers know the desperate financial situation of the enterprise concerned rather than keeping a veil of secrecy over the accounts), and, vitally, a relationship based on treating workers as partners and stakeholders rather than as clients and subordinates, that made structural reforms, painful as they were, possible.

Is this then the wave of the future, in which workers will join owners in a stakeholders' property-owning democracy in the context of a postcolonial economy? More research is needed before one could draw a general inference on these lines, but the study, like the volume as a whole, holds exciting new openings for research on the delicate economic underbelly of postcolonial democracies.

India, the Lonely Moralist? Identity, Security, Democracy, and the Bomb

The moral opprobrium against India's nuclear test carries the whiff of an older debate that used to divide social workers in the USA not so long ago: "Should poor women on welfare payments buy lipstick?" India was much poorer in 1974, when the first "Peaceful Nuclear Explosion" took place. India's search for nuclear parity despite the peaceful legacy of Buddha, Gandhi, and Nehru is the cause of much incomprehension and concern. The other charge against the bomb is that it is a symbol of a resurgent "Hindu" India. The main merit of *India's Nuclear Bomb and National Security* is to give a balanced and analytical account of the dynamics of India's nuclear buildup which explores the linkage of domestic and security policies and links both to elite perceptions. Security, as Karsten Frey argues in this book, is far more than a matter of mere national safety. India's struggle for international recognition is one of the pivotal driving forces behind India's quest for nuclear status.

Frey dissects the process through which decisions about security are arrived at and examines the influences at work inside the political system. He explains the framework of decision-making and relates the arguments for and against moving from conventional to nuclear weapons systems made by the various actors. Seen from this angle, the process of decision-making with regard to the weapons systems becomes legitimately a part of the process of general decision-making, and the actors concerned emerge as rational, interest-maximizing agents of their agendas. Frey reaches this objective by examining, first, the domestic factors (the institutional framework, elections, science and engineering, nuclear research and development, and economic and technological self-reliance); second, questions directly related to security (India's nuclear doctrine and perceptions of threats from Pakistan and China); and, third, the international nuclear order (India's status relative to the West and to control regimes such the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty). The main methodological innovation is in the form of an "archival analysis" of leading articles by experts in five Indian newspapers, which serves as an ingenious way of assembling the changing structure of Indian elite opinion with regard to the contents of India's security policy.

The book explains two major puzzles regarding the Indian tests of 1998. It is not often realized in the West that India's switch from conventional to nuclear weapons, which gave Pakistan an excuse to do likewise, actually reduced India's previous superiority over Pakistan to parity. If countries are power-maximizing

players, then India's behavior with regard to her arch enemy does not make intuitive sense. Second, if the 1998 tests were aimed at China, then why did India wait so long, considering that India's nuclear program is older than China's, that India had already acquired nuclear capacity by 1974, and that for most of the 1980s India was a nuclear-threshold country, meaning a country that had not yet moved to "weaponization," but could do so at short notice? Frey gives a detailed and judicious answer to these questions and shows how the reforms in the structure of accountability have helped India consolidate the nuclear command and control structure within the framework of the democratic process, and incorporate the role of the scientific establishment with it.

For the puzzle that underpins this review article, the main contribution of *India's Nuclear Bomb and National Security* is to show that the bomb was indeed Indian and not Hindu,[15] that it was homemade and not assembled from stolen parts, and that the political institutions of the country have had a decisive voice in its making. Frey helps clarify democratic India's obsession with the bomb, an area-specific factor closely tied to India's self-perception in ways seldom understood by students of international security and comparative democratization. With "nuclearization," unbound India has turned yet another corner, but the main objective, which is to chart out a course as a "moral" voice in international politics, remains the same. It is this resolve that explains Nehru's championing of nonalignment at the height of the Cold War, the constant litany of the "colonial West" by his successors to high office in India regardless of their party affiliation, India's holding up of the Geneva nonproliferation negotiations in the mid-1990s against world opinion,[16] and finally, the nuclear tests of 1998.[17] The irony of the situation was that even as India held up negotiations, championing the case of the nuclear have-nots, there was little support for the Indian position internationally, including among the nonaligned Afro-Asian states. Why does democratic India so often find itself isolated from world public opinion? We shall return to this question later in the article.

From Mahatma Gandhi to Indira Gandhi: Avatars of Indian Democracy?

The admiration tinged with anxiety that the resurgent India of the 21st century evokes makes one forget just how uncertain the transition to statehood and stable democracy was at crucial junctures in India's post-Independence career. The outstanding merit of Guha's hugely enjoyable *India After Gandhi* is to tell the story exactly the way it happened and guide the reader through the perilous journey.

The reference to the two Gandhis of Indian politics (Mohandas Karamchand and Indira) is a red herring for nonspecialists. There is no dynastic or biological link between the two. The first was the Mahatma (the Great Soul and the Father of the Nation), who continues to be the iconic figure of Indian politics even six decades after his assassination, the sole figure who is the moral reference point for both left liberals and the cultural right; the second, Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi, carried the Gandhi name because of her marriage to Feroze Gandhi, a Parsi gentleman (not related to the Mahatma and a rebellious spouse in later life). Guha's narrative, with a focus on Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi's acolyte and successor and Indira Gandhi's father, is framed by his discussion of the two Gandhis of Indian politics.

In 30 meticulously documented, short, crisp chapters, drawing on archival sources, personal papers, interviews, and conversations, Guha's riveting narrative tells the story of the early, uncertain years after Independence. Crammed into the first two years after Independence was a series of near-catastrophes. Collapsing order and mass slaughter, rape, and pillage followed in the wake of India's Partition in 1947 as the British withdrew abruptly, completely abandoning their moral responsibility to oversee the consequences of partitioning the British Dominion into two hostile neighbors. This was accompanied by foot-dragging on the part of the Indian princes, free at last from the paramount control of the British and wavering between joining India, Pakistan, or going it alone; the murderous assault on Kashmir by armed Pathan tribals from Pakistan; and a revolutionary uprising of land-hungry peasants under the leadership of Indian communists inspired by the successful Chinese Revolution. The post-Independence state emerged from these ordeals cohesive and ready for electoral battle in 1951–52 – the charismatic Nehru setting out on the campaign trail, a hastily put together electoral bureaucracy preparing the electoral rolls for 150 million electors, and the new Election Commission scrutinizing the credentials of thousands of candidates, many of them drawn from the ranks of political organizations tainted with the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi and from the ranks of the recently unbanned revolutionary communists. Nor was the outcome of the election (a spectacular victory for the Congress Party, freshly transformed into an electoral machine from its pre-Independence character of a broad-based anticolonial movement) entirely smooth sailing for Nehru and his Congress government. There were enemies just across the border to the west and east, for belligerent Pakistan immediately became an outpost for its new allies in the West, and to the north, as the Chinese unleashed a border war and fermented radical uprisings within India once the euphoria of *Hindi–Chini Bhai Bhai* ("India and China are brothers") collapsed on the battlefields of the high Himalayas in 1962. To make it all even more complicated, there was the enemy within (the right wing of Congress, factionalism, creeping corruption, and mass poverty and hunger) that had to be somehow accommodated within the structure of the Congress Party.

Guha recounts all this with the natural flair of a born storyteller and the disciplined documentary skills of the historian. The result is a book as valuable to those unfamiliar with South Asia as to students of comparative politics. In juxtaposing the possible with the probable, Guha's narrative does come to a definite prognosis:

> Poverty persists in some (admittedly broad) pockets, yet one can now be certain that India will not go the way of sub-Saharan Africa and witness widespread famine. Secessionist movements are active here and there, but there is no longer any fear that India will follow the former Yugoslavia and break up into a dozen fratricidal parts. The powers of the state are sometimes grossly abused, but no one seriously thinks that India will emulate neighbouring Pakistan, where the chief of army staff is generally also head of government. (Guha: 770)[18]

Why should the uncertain past matter so much to the analysis of India's present, which the historian's prognosis pronounces as relatively solid in any case? The stories of near-catastrophes that one learns from Guha's analysis help us appreciate the enormity of India's achievements in state-building and in

laying the foundations of electoral democracy, both of which students of Indian politics sometimes take for granted. It goes to the credit of the historian to show students of comparative democratic theory how crucial the role of ordinary people (civil servants, party workers, local leaders, and reporters) is in upholding stateness while waiting for Lady Luck to do the rest.[19] This is a valuable lesson for studying the comparative politics of young democracies, because the analytical domain of this research draws as much on the politics *within* the system as on the politics *of* the system and demonstrates the crucial role of contingent factors in determining the course of development.

Despite the empirical insights that Guha provides for understanding the functioning of India's democracy and its failings, his analysis does not go deep enough into the issue of legitimacy. In the parliamentary elections of 1977, the Congress Party, for the first time in the history of post-Independence India, failed to win a majority. However, the defeat was not due to any significant loss of political support but rather to the fact that in this election, they fought as part of a broad-based coalition called the Janata Party. In terms of the popular vote, support for Indira Gandhi's Congress Party remained at a respectable 33 percent of the Indian electorate and went down by only 7 percent compared with its previous share of the vote. Further, as the Janata coalition, with recrimination growing between the socialists and Hindu nationalists, steadily lost coherence and authority, the country went to the polls in 1980 and a triumphant Indira Gandhi, the unrepentant author of the Emergency, returned to power with a majority in the parliament.

The democratic gap in Indian politics during the Emergency and the apparent appeal of popular authoritarianism make some specialists hesitant about letting India into the exclusive club of liberal democracy. In India itself, the panoply of democratic discourse conceals a deep ambivalence, sending mixed signals to western commentators and their Indian counterparts. This makes it particularly important for those who are sympathetic toward the case for India to undertake a rigorous analysis of the sociopsychological base of popular authoritarianism and illiberal ideologies – an empirical exercise sorely lacking in the admirable books by Chakraborty et al. and Sen.[20]

Over and above the normative value of liberalism, one must not lose sight of the instrumental appeal of power and the very raison d'être of politics as the basis of who gets what. As Guha reports, Mahatma Gandhi's understanding of this hidden dimension of politics (manifest when he linked *swaraj* ("self-rule") and salt in his famous Salt March, which brought the Indian multitudes into the Non-cooperation Movement against British rule) was reactivated by Indira Gandhi in the populist buildup to her resounding electoral victory of 1971, as she rode back to power on the slogan *garibi hatao* ("get rid of poverty"). This all-pervasive instrumentality of politics is a quintessential element of Indian democracy. Nehru, as Dipesh Chakraborty informs us, had tried to "harness it in the interest of development."[21] In splitting Congress (the basis of Nehru's system of rule) and projecting it as an attempt to rescue popular democracy from the clutches of the "Syndicate" (an epithet applied to a handful of regional Congress power brokers), Indira Gandhi released this spirit and thus retained the bulk of popular legitimacy.[22]

Indira Gandhi's effort to rein in the masses in her brutal suppression of the National Railwaymen's Strike of 1974 and the national agitation under Jaya

Prakash Narayan that followed mobilized resistance to her regime from the political left, right, and center. Roughly speaking, this wave of popular mobilization was split along the North–South divide of Indian politics. North India, where the suppression of democratic rights was the most severe during the Emergency, voted against Indira Gandhi in the general elections of 1977, whereas the South remained with the Congress Party of Indira. The effective combination of a valued symbol and instrumentalism is always the basis of political success in contemporary India. This combination was the basis of the uprising in Punjab that ultimately led to the assassination of Indira Gandhi, and of the rise of Hindu nationalism, which in the end achieved electoral power in Delhi. During the past decade, the alternating coalitions of the NDA, with the Hindu nationalists at its core, and the left-center forces united in the UPA coalition provide the institutional space within the spectrum of India's party politics capable of containing the bulk of the electorate within the framework of democratic politics. This well-established pattern makes radical protest in contemporary India more a symbolic assertion of the legitimacy of dissent than a basic threat to the power of the state.

The historian of the present must reckon with an occupational hazard: the present becomes the past before the ink dries, for politics, like time, never stops. Readers of *India After Gandhi* are likely to look for Sonia Gandhi, the third "Gandhi" of Indian politics, who is missing from Guha's detailed scrutiny. Following the 2004 general elections, Sonia Gandhi has emerged as the central figure of Indian politics. Sonia is the widow of Indira's son Rajiv Gandhi, assassinated by Tamil terrorists in 1989 when he was on the campaign trail in South India. The resurgence of Congress under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi illustrates the links between legitimacy and popular mobilization, a structural response to a need that many feel in their everyday lives. In his concluding statement, Guha asserts that Indians are aware of it, and this keeps India's democratic unfolding on course.

The main finding of interest to political scientists in *India After Gandhi* is the discovery of a theoretical cord that binds the three Gandhis. Mahatma Gandhi had discovered the roots of legitimacy in the political soil and deep memory of India and tried to shape it within the structure of a modern political organization, that is, the Indian National Congress. Indira Gandhi correctly diagnosed the fading charisma of a Nehru regime whose secular democracy had been hollowed out through its failure to deliver the essential goods of life and tried to restore its authority through fiat. Sonia Gandhi, through some uncanny osmosis, appears to have taken on both Gandhis, and has brought together an improbable cast of characters: a Sikh prime minister, a female president (whose predecessor was a Muslim), and herself, who though Italian born and Catholic, is president of the Congress Party and now the anchor of the ruling coalition without actually becoming prime minister. For now, she has been able to hold both extremes of Indian politics (the cultural right and the revolutionary left) at bay, and has given the masses something akin to the institutionalized charisma of the democratic state to conjure with. Guha says,

> Speaking now of India, the nation-state, one must insist that its future lies not in the hands of god but in the mundane works of men. So long as the constitution is not amended beyond recognition, so long as elections are held regularly and fairly and the ethos of secularism broadly prevails, so long as

> citizens can speak and write in the language of their choosing, so long as there is an integrated market and a moderately efficient civil service and army, and – lest I forget – so long as Hindi films are watched and their songs sung, India will survive. (Guha: 771)

Those who have enjoyed the simple social messages, unsanctimonious moralizing, and infectious buoyancy of Hindi films and witnessed the antics of India's politicians in parliament or at the hustings will surely appreciate the robust optimism of Guha's prognosis.

Six Texts in Search of Democracy in the South: An Idiosyncratic Harvest with Comparative Potential

Looking back at the six texts together and at contemporary politics in India through them, one gets a general sense of India's democracy, in terms of its origin, everyday politics, and the essence of its sustainability. Contemporary Indian politics has transformed the parties of the revolutionary left and the cultural right into pro-system parties,[23] and shown a capacity for innovation through a continuous process of adapting imported institutions to indigenous needs.

The pervasive presence of political and administrative skills is a second common point that emerges from all the books. The success of India's democracy owes much to these skills, both political and administrative, which are harnessed to the needs of the machinery of the state and the political system, as the authors reviewed here show. These skills account for "India's reform by stealth" (Jenkins in Mukherji: 170), the skillful conducting of India's general elections by the National Election Commission (see, in particular, Guha's account of the first general election), the combination of political clout and cunning with administrative acumen in the integration of princely states within the Indian republic (Guha), and the alacrity of the Indian judiciary in defending basic rights (see Mehta in *Public Institutions in India*). Of course, not all the requisite skills are available and when available, they are not always put to their most effective use in safeguarding accountability and transparency – points made quite clear in Deena Khatakate's study of banking ("Reserve Bank of India") in Kapur and Mehta's *Public Institutions in India* and Krishnan and Somanathan on the "civil service" in the same volume. The fact remains, however, that the availability of such skills and the value that the political system attaches to them have been crucial to India's transition to democracy.

The third point that emerges from the books is the importance of the role of the public intellectual (academics, students, social workers, and increasingly, nongovernmental organizations and the media) in voicing dissent and extending representation, providing thereby a valuable complement to parties and movements. Scholars such as Sen and Guha combine the roles of the skillful academic and the concerned citizen, and both are by no means unique in this regard. The obverse side of this phenomenon, that is the tendency of Indian academics to be too easily critical of the achievements of Indian democracy, may seem strange to those unfamiliar with South Asia. The fact that some of the best-known indigenous scholars of politics in India should claim India's democracy to be a façade, underpinned by anti-people policies, feudal loyalties, and corruption, is puzzling. Could this merely be a case of the glass being half empty?

The main strength of the critique of the quality of political life, a concept that has gone out of political analysis since Bentham, is a variable that research

agendas on cross-cultural analysis might wish to incorporate. Essays on the crisis of secularism, the political assertion of marginal social groups, the volatility of political institutions, and the decline of social movements which draw our attention to the gap between procedural and substantive democracy can enrich our general and comparative understanding of what makes democracy work, particularly in the light of problems faced by minorities, immigrants, and women all over the world.

Beyond India: Thick Politics, Overarching Theory

Beyond the specific collective strengths of these six books lie several other, yet broader truths that reading them in conjunction brings to mind. The main argument with which the authors reviewed here have approached the transition to democracy is that the evolution and sustenance of democratic regimes is the by-product of competition for power, reinforced by political institutions. It is by focusing on the simple facts of political life such as interests, institutions, and process (and vitally, though less frequently, identity) that political agents produce and sustain the rules of transaction that constitute local variations on democracy appropriate to the culture and context. Understandably, as some of the authors reviewed here argue, elections are necessary, but not sufficient to make democracy work. Institutions may critically affect the nature of political competition in a given context, but they do not produce the context in the first place. Similarly, political and social reform affect the nature of competition in society through their impact on the status quo, and as such, are an integral part of the research agenda for the study of the evolution of democracy as well.

The books reviewed in this article also relate to the question of how best to conduct comparative studies today. They have all asked a general question (that concerning the evolution, maintenance, and sustainability of democracy) in the specific context of India's politics, institutional arrangement, society, economy, and foreign and security policy. Such analysis is open for application to the other states of South Asia with which India shares not just a boundary, but the deeper aspects of its own political persona. Conversely, our engagement with these area-specific books has generated some insights relevant to democracy, but indigenous to South Asia, that might contribute, heuristically, to comparative research design. What is the role of ontological uncertainty about the ultimate truth (so specific to South Asian religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, or for that matter, South Asian Christianity and Islam) in sustaining democracy? Similarly, how do the regional politics of a dominant power affect the chances for the growth of democratic regimes in the smaller powers of the area? These issues, not covered by the books reviewed here, open up the space for future comparative research both within South Asia and in cross-national and inter-contextual studies.

Finally, our study of these six books brings with it important reminders regarding the quest for liberal democracy. Liberalism (minimally understood as freely expressed and fairly aggregated individual preferences as the basis of rule, accountability, and the legitimacy of differences) is the basis of contemporary political science. As such, offering evidence of how liberal democracy is able to transcend divisions based on geography, culture, and ideology is crucial to its claim to a universal character.[24] The success of India's democracy (despite

the prevalence of social hierarchy germane to the caste system, the continued effectiveness of religious symbols, beliefs, and practices in private and public life, and radical differences in material standards of living) should make the viability of Indian democracy the jewel in the crown for those who assert the quest for democracy to be universal – indeed, the only game in town. How does the record of India's democracy as we have seen it in these six texts help in establishing liberal democracy's claim to universality?

With regard to the Indian "evidence," some would argue that the jury is still out. The unique features of Indian democracy make the Indian case difficult to generalize regarding the cross-cultural transferability of liberal norms and institutions. Indian democracy, compared with the legacy with which Pakistan began its postindependence career, was born with a silver spoon in its mouth. The fortuitous character of the Indian context, such as the relatively more cohesive political land mass that emerged in India after the partition of the country or the role of serendipity in the availability of leaders of the caliber of Gandhi, Nehru, and Patel, who molded inchoate interests into institutionalized political groups, are comparative advantages that need to be acknowledged. Nor is the argument of longevity (that Indian democracy is already in its sixtieth year and has taken the authoritarian interlude in its stride) convincing enough because both Chile and Germany were functioning democracies before their fall.

In contrast to the skeptics' view, the six books reviewed here assert that India's democratic capital (very much a post-Independence creation) has transformed its democratic potential into a vibrant, robust, and resilient reality. Catalytic factors such as modern institutions, accountability, and elections have quickened the pace of change and stabilized democratic practices. As our authors report, thanks to the efforts of generations of skillful leaders, bureaucrats, and journalists, India has achieved levels of inclusiveness, political change, and policy stability that match those of the stable liberal democracies of the West. The mold has set. Indian politics has acquired the institutional capacity to sustain democracy into the foreseeable future. How much of the key to India's success (a level playing field capable of sustaining democracy) is cross-nationally transferable only future comparative research can tell.

Notes

1. See the classic study of social capital by Putnam et al. (1993). Krishna (2002) has drawn attention to the absence of political agency in social capital.
2. For a test of the hypothesis that policies based on the management of order, provision of welfare, and accommodation of identity lead to democratic governance, see Mitra (2005, 2008a).
3. Following the convention, explaining the inclusion criteria for the books reviewed, set by Steven B. Wolinetz (2007: 572), I have concentrated on recent books that interface South Asian area studies and the transition to democracy. In my list, texts on colonial history and economic reform supplement those on political institutions and moral philosophy, in order to keep a balance between various corners of the field; the list of authors includes both scholars indigenous to South Asia as well as specialists from outside the area.
4. The Maoists of Nepal have gone to the polls and discovered the joys of electoral power. Bhutan's Buddhist monarchy has paved the way for party competition and electoral politics. Following a recent general election, the elected Pakistani prime minister is engaged in peace negotiations with India. True, in military-controlled Bangladesh,

and in Sri Lanka, where the army, under civilian control, is on the offensive against the Tamil Tigers, the fate of liberal democracy is uncertain. But even in these countries, confirmed pessimists will not detect the same bleak despair that one feels when thinking about the prospects for democracy in Sudan or Myanmar. In any case, "more than anywhere else, the concern and debate [regarding South Asian democratization] are located in India itself" (Pehl, Malte, personal communication, April 2008).

5. Celebrated among the skeptics are Harrison (1960), Brass (2003), and Nussbaum (2007).
6. Sen's discussion of Gandhi's inimitable skill in balancing singular and plural identities points in this direction. For two-track strategies, see Mitra (1991).
7. See Pattanaik (2008). The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN Escap), which reported 86,922 farmers' suicides during the period 2001–05, has lauded the Union government's "move to address the farm debt issue in the Union budget." See *Statesman Weekly* (2008: 7).
8. India's neighbors have kept pace with her record. Pakistan, with its checkered history of civil–military relations, has seen a high-profile assassination and a resurgent Taliban in the Northwest. In Sri Lanka, the Norwegian peacemakers have departed, marking the difficulty of resolving ethnic conflict through democratic negotiation. In Bangladesh, stalemated competition between the two main parties, both determined to win at whatever cost, has brought in the army as the keeper of order, initially as a provisional solution, but more likely as an enduring presence.
9. Guha's delineation of Nehru's final, agonizing days (1962–64) following India's defeat by China and Frey's description of the isolation of India in the Vienna nonproliferation negotiation (1995–98) are, for Indian commentators, evocative of the fate of Prometheus, who had dared to steal fire from the gods. They see a parallel in the Indian claim of fighting for nuclear equality between the western "haves" and the non-western "have-nots." As his punishment, "Zeus bound him inextricably to a column with painful shackles which he wound to waist height. Then he let loose an eagle and the eagle ate of his immortal liver." See Comte (1991: 168), citing Hesiod's *Theogony*.
10. Varadarajan (2006) adds:

> To understand Mr. Sen's desire to get away from religion-based political taxonomy, one must be aware of where, as they say, he is coming from. The Nobel laureate – who has taken to describing himself as a "feminist economist" – is a full-fledged member of the Indian "progressive" left. If there is one concern that drives this group, that animates its politics like no other, it is the perfectly well-meaning desire to safeguard India's Muslim minority from the excesses of the country's Hindu right. This desire has led to such contortions as the left's defence of a separate personal law for India's Muslims (which leaves Muslim women at the mercy of inequitable rules on divorce and inheritance) merely because the Hindu right campaigns for a uniform civil code for all Indian citizens, irrespective of religion.

11. See the sophisticated analysis of memory, trauma, and communal violence by the psychoanalyst Sudhir Kakar (1995).
12. Some specialists who focus on Kashmir, the Northeast, and communal riots in India question this (Spiess, Clemens, personal communication, April 2008).
13. *The Hindu* (2008) has reported on such deaths: "Yet another debt-ridden Vidarbha farmer immolated himself, leaping into a pile of burning hay last Friday, according to Kishore Tiwari of the Vidarbha Jan Andolan Samiti (VJAS)." This article added, "The VJAS has requested Union Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar [who hails from Maharashtra] to visit farmers on Monday instead of attending the function in Nagpur to inaugurate the terminal at the new airport. The VJAS has demanded better prices for cotton, fresh credit to farmers, food crop promotion and social security."
14. Mukherji (personal communication, April 2008) holds this as a point of critical importance for Indian democracy.

15. "In retrospect, the Hindu-bomb explanation appears too simplistic to explain the 1998 tests ... the base of support for India's nuclear breakthrough was much broader than the Hindu right ... [Moreover,] domestic political development might even have protracted rather than accelerated India's decision to claim nuclear status" (Frey: 75).
16. "The official statements by the Indian government [maintained] that India had no intention to develop nuclear weapons, but was willing to pay any political and economic price to 'keep its nuclear option open'. The underlying logic remained largely inscrutable to the international audience, illustrating the discrepancy between the international non-proliferation discourse and India's isolated nuclear debate before 1998" (Frey: 206–7).
17. One thinks here of the Lone Ranger, a position normally attributed to the USA. "While India's isolation concerned some strategists, a majority defiantly maintained this view and created the myth of India as the 'lonely moralist' that stood firm against pressure from the 'nuclear haves'" (Frey: 203).
18. By relinquishing his position as the chief of staff of the army, President Pervez Musharaff of Pakistan has proved Guha wrong for now. Though some reviewers have taken issue with some of the specific statements of Guha, his overall optimism has been generally endorsed. See the following comment by George Perkovich (2007):

    > A toast to India on its 60th birthday: No country has more heroically pursued the promise of democracy. Against the odds of staggering poverty, conflicting religious passions, linguistic pluralism, regional separatism, caste injustice and natural resource scarcity, Indians have lifted themselves largely by their own sandal straps to become a stalwart democracy and emerging global power. India has risen with epic drama – a nonviolent struggle for independence followed by mass mayhem and bloodletting, dynastic succession and assassination, military victory and defeat, starvation succeeded by green revolution, political leaders as saints, sinners and sexual ascetics. And yet, the Indian story rarely has been told and is practically unknown to Americans ... *India After Gandhi* masterfully fills the void.

    Perkovich (2007) adds, "Sixty years after Gandhi, India has earned greater appreciation than we give it."
19. See Guha (Ch. 4) for the pillage of Baramula, which temporarily delayed the Pathan raiders and gave the Indian army just enough time to save Srinagar, and the efforts of the volunteers of the National Conference to keep law and order when the civil administration collapsed.
20. "The linkage between democracy and identity in India," Karsten Frey (personal communication, April 2008) suggests, "is much more complex than suggested [by Chakraborty et al. and Sen]. The democratic outlook itself has become an integral part of Indian identity, a kind of fetish in the construction of India's self-image. The recurring reference to India as the 'world's largest democracy' in virtually every article, essay, book etc. is ample evidence for the existence of this fetish." Removing the barrier of 1947 from the political analysis of India's democratic discourse helps link the modern to the premodern. Once this is done, one can see why "nuclear weapons are not just symbolic expressions of India's identity; but are themselves shaping identity" (ibid.).
21. As Nehru put it, "My entire life has been spent in politics and even now I have to give most of my time to it ... Ultimately, however, the real problem in front of us is the economic progress of India" (Chakraborty et al.: 34).
22. I had noticed this symbolic appeal of Indira Gandhi's rhetoric regarding the empowerment of the poor, the lower social orders, and the tribals in the course of my fieldwork in Orissa during the Emergency. Indira Gandhi had emerged, in the village where my study was located, as a symbol for the have-nots (not in the classic Marxist sense, but as a popular icon), for all those who felt that they had been left out. See Mitra (1979).

23. As Guha suggests, "to call BJP 'fascist' is to diminish the severity and seriousness of the murderous crimes committed by the original fascists in Italy and Germany ... to see the party (BJP) as fascist would be both to overestimate its powers and to underestimate the democratic traditions of the Indian people" (Guha: 755). Guha points out that the BJP "vigorously promotes linguistic pluralism" and that one of the general secretaries of the party is a Muslim. "Even if he is dismissed as a token," Guha goes on to remind the reader that in India's competitive politics this symbolic presence underlines the power and legitimacy of India's plural and accommodative polity, which was part and parcel of Congress politics at its most successful.
24. The cross-cultural validity of liberal democracy, which had dropped out of the agenda of contemporary political analysis because of the accidental fact that it happens to be the ruling myth of the world's only superpower, is in critical need of revival as an issue of scholarly debate. See Mitra (1999).

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Biographical Note

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