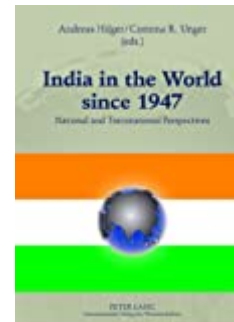


Andreas Hilger, Corinna R. Unger. *India in the World since 1947: National and Transnational Perspectives.* Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang/Frankfurt am Main, 2012. 384 S. ISBN 978-3-631-61178-4.



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A. Hilger u.a. (Hrsg.): India in the World since 1947

This is a book as diverse in its contents as its subject of research – India. An eclectic mix of topics as distinct as urban planning in a North Indian city to the question of secularism and its implications for Indian Muslims, from the conception and the realization of the Delhi-Metro-Polis to the prominent Indian Diaspora in the United States, from the trajectories of Indian media before and after liberalization to Indo-German relations since 1947, from India’s nuclear policy to the themes of population control and employment/unemployment issues – the list goes on. What then could the red-strings connecting these different topical foci be that lend the book continuity, one is bound to ask. Here the editors Andreas Hilger and Corinna R. Unger answer in stating “Our argument is [â] that India has a rich history of transnational connections and exchanges, and that it is important to contextualize India’s current developments in its transnational history [â] Only if we study India in the world since 1947 can we understand India in the world today and tomorrow” (p. 9). Linked to this point, the book has specifically three assets which make it a highly valuable read.

First, the transnational lens which adds to a nuanced

understanding of India’s international entanglements. These have born repercussions also for domestic politics in the shape of economic ties and funding received from Euro-America and the former Soviet Union, military ties especially during the Cold War period, and cultural ties forged through an ever expanding Indian Diaspora in different parts of the world. All contributions, even if dealing with issues that appear to be very “internal”, reflect on these transnational dimensions though never undermining the importance of the domestic factors.

Second, the book provides a good overview on a myriad of subjects and can be highly informative for those who wish to be introduced to the entity called “India”. In other words, it is a good introduction for beginners but nonetheless will not be a disappointment for specialists on Indian history and contemporary politics who will find new elements in the details that the chapters offer.

Third, the book gives due regard to historical contexts that have shaped the nature of the contemporary Indian nation-state. It is commonplace to read scholarship on contemporary developments in the country, especially after the onset of market liberalization, which situates

it within larger discourses on the loose term 'globalization'. What this book brings to the forefront is that the interdependencies, ties and engagements with other nation-states are not a new phenomenon at all that proceeded only once economic liberalization occurred in India. In that sense, it traces many phenomena in their rightful context by giving history its due.

It is divided into four sections *videlicet* Identities, Ideas, Resources and Power each with four contributing chapters. Though one could provide a detailed review of each of the contributions, the attempt here is to review them briefly and more in the context of the objectives set out more generally by the editors. William Gould provides a historical account of the secularism debate in India, however with a specific focus on its implications for the Muslim minority. Gould convincingly elucidates how the diverse and scattered Muslim minorities in India have often benefitted from the Indian 'loosely defined secularism' (p. 57). The chapter traces this history by not just confining to the development of the paradigm of secularism after independence but also by delving into the question during the colonial era, especially in terms of the relations Muslims historically shared with the Congress party. In continuity with the thematic 'Identities', the chapter by Nicolas Blarel traces two episodes of linguistic movements with the potential of escalating into secessionist struggles in post-colonial India – the states of Tamil Nadu and Punjab. The author shows how the state's different reactions to the two cases reflect the flexible and self-modifying nature of policies, therein indicating how the government has been 'more reactive than proactive' (p. 75). This is a more refined approach that invites de-constructing the fixed nature of state policies especially in a post-colonial context. Sunil Bhatia and Anjali Ram move the subject to post 1965 Indian immigrants in the United States and their narrations of the self. The chapter is laden with illustrations of the diversity in age and professions of this loose category and with prominent examples of the influence of Bollywood in negotiating this Indianness. However, one is not introduced in depth to the topic of remittances, which have kept the bridges with the 'homeland' alive and perhaps also have a subtle, yet conspicuous, impact on what it means to be 'Indian' outside of India. Manjeet Pardesi's contribution on India's relations with China and Southeast Asia up to 1991 is informative from the perspective of engaging with the shifting nature of geopolitical alignments in the larger region, but one wonders why this chapter is situated within the first section and not in the last one which deals more exclusively with foreign policy and the

Indian state's relations with other states. Here the links to Non Alignment and the Cold War context would speak more to the themes touched by the last section on 'Power' rather than the first one.

Section two titled 'Ideas' deals with a plethora of old and new subjects. Vijay Singh provides a comprehensive yet detailed history of Communists in India after 1947 whereas David C. Engerman's chapter focuses on the exchanges and disagreements between Indian economic planners (particularly P.C. Mahalanobis) and foreign experts who visited India as economic advisers (particular example of Max F. Millikan from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)). The chapter gives interesting details which show how Indian economists maneuvered the prevalence of their planning models, often in opposition to advised ones, while nonetheless maintaining elaborate contacts with foreign advisors. Michael Mann's contribution brings to foreground an important, yet understudied, subject – the Delhi-Metro-Polis. Hailed as an achievement of the Indian state, the Delhi Metro also presents a counter story of slum clearances and the eviction of beggars who are viewed as a hindrance in the realization of Delhi as a 'world-class city' (p. 156). The chapter is a valuable read not only because of its relative newness but also because of the rich historical context. It lucidly shows the bifurcating consequences of urbanization in a city which is used for showcasing a nation's rise in a global context. In this case the medium for realizing the world status of a megacity is the Delhi Metro, a transportation mode which though deemed to connect different parts of the city and neighbouring regions, is ironically producing numerous disconnections and cleavages socially. Boris Niclas-Till's contribution is also a highly informative piece dealing with 'modern town planning' of the north Indian city of Chandigarh, a project undertaken by a Frenchman (Le Corbusier). Interesting links between town planning, unofficial labour, demographic weight, public housing programs, and the nature of public transportation in a city develop as the chapter proceeds to show what has worked and has not worked in the case of Chandigarh.

Section three 'Resources', starts with Hans Joachim Bieber's discussions of the first stages of India's nuclear policy. This is an informative account that captures how Indian nuclear policy did not necessarily fixate on the civilian use of nuclear energy only but that traces of the tilt towards the development of nuclear weapons may already be observed during the period when nuclear disarmament was strongly associated with the Nehruvian era. The details the author uncovers in terms of the exchanges

between Homi J. Bhabha and Nehru are especially engaging. However, the dichotomization drawn between âculturalâ and âeconomic/military and politicalâ concerns could be avoided to prevent reading them as exclusive rather than inter-related categories. Mohan Raoâs chapter journeys from the theme of Eugenics through the population question in India to the more recent development of reproductive tourism. There is rich material in the contribution which may have new details for many interested in this area but the chapter could have benefited from a concrete conclusion that brings the three individual sections more substantially together. Nadja-Christina Schneider provides a meticulous overview of the booming âoldâ and ânewâ media in India: the trajectory of print media into becoming âa true mass mediumâ, (p. 237) the commercialization of media as a way of âincluding non-urban or less organized urbanized areas in public discourseâ (ibid.) the shift from the state owned channel *Doordarshan* to the arrival of satellite television, right up to the theme of cultural imperialism and Indiaâs aspirations of being a media power. These are dense issues and each section of the contribution does justice to the prominent historical contexts. The chapter also succeeds in overcoming the temporal dichotomies (of before and after 1947 and 1991) which are often conjured in writing on Indian themes in that it gives weight to both though not steering clear of the continuities and discontinuities. Finally, Dietmar Rothermundâs chapter on employment and unemployment in India makes the section even richer in content. Detailed discussions on organized and unorganized sectors of the economy, the role of Trade Unions in India, migration patterns of labour, the rural-urban divides, the regional disparities and the entry of Indian labour into the world market â this contribution is well thought out and indeed reflects on all related dimensions of employment and unemployment.

The final section âPowerâ begins with Jennifer Bus-selâs chapter on Indian Foreign Policy and its co-relation to the relative success of Indian democracy in comparison to many parallels that could be drawn with several post-colonial states. The chapter finds continuity with the following three chapters as well. Robert J. Mc-Mohanâs contribution on India and the Cold War, Amit Dasguptaâs work on Indo-German relations and finally Srinath Raghavanâs chapter on the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 all engage directly or indirectly with the Cold War context and how the Indian nation-state situated itself in the competing arenas through the Non Aligned

Movement initiated by Nehru. However, each one offers new insights through details in a specific case. Though themes like Non Alignment and Indiaâs alleged tilt towards the former Soviet Union may sound like familiar stories to those acquainted with Indian history, the chaptersâ newness lies in the details. However, one caveat to be added here is that even though these contributions base themselves within the disciplines of International Relations or Political Science, a more careful presentation of the varied actors calls for attention. In this regard, it is important to avoid generalizations in terming a particular politician or governmentâs political moves, policies and statements under the umbrella synecdoche of âNew Delhiâ, âIndiaâ or âWashingtonâ. Such presentations run the danger of assuming the homogeneity of nations whereby it often seems that New Delhi or India become a singular, faceless entity whose singularity is a given. This could lead to a re-enforcing and therein reproduction of categorizations which disciplinary borders often coerce on academic production and also to overlooking the pluralities of voices within âIndiaâ which have in fact contested the stances of individual governments. A volume that aims to overcome a strictly nation-state based research could be more sensitive in its usage of such emic categories, where borders are not only set by territories but can be disciplinary in nature as well.

Another more general critique is with relation to the usage of the year 1991. Many of the chapters utilize and present this as a caesura in the career of the Indian state and economy alike. There are numerous debates on that topic especially given the fact that market liberalization already began piecemeal during the 1980s. 1991 however, appears to be a moment which is emphasized because the reforms were officially institutionalized in that year following the balance of payments crisis. However, contestations abound here in that the year â1991â could be critiqued as a state fabricated narrative, often utilized as part of a larger discourse on Indiaâs international âarrivalâ as an emerging power. A sound conclusion that would reflect on what the *production* of that year in both state and academic discourses implies, as well as one that would bring all chapters together *after* the reader has read them in depth could add to the richness of the book. That said, the volume is recommendable for those interested in India related topics, whether beginners or specialists. The book can generate new interest in a plethora of topics and yet the discussions in the individual chapters do not deal with the subjects only superficially.

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