

Democracy, Development, and Conflict in South Asia

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Course description

This class introduces core topics in the study of South Asian politics. Further, it aims to use evidence from South Asia—focusing on the cases of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka—to shed light on some of the central questions in the study of comparative and international politics. The course is structured in three parts. We start with introductions to the recent histories of the region's major states, and attempt to derive some general explanations for salient political trends. A focus will be on trying to understand why the regime trajectories followed by these nations since independence have diverged so dramatically. Next, we consider violent conflict in South Asia. We will examine the role played by ethnicity and religion in fomenting disorder, as well as nuclear weapons' contribution to regional stability. The third section covers key topics in human and economic development, notably the political economy of corruption, caste, gender, the natural environment, poverty alleviation, liberalization, and growth. Students will engage with a wide range of theoretical debates in the social sciences. Along the way, they will also gain a rich and textured knowledge of the modern political evolution of the subcontinent, which is home to one quarter of the world's population.

Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for the class. It will be of most immediate interest to students majoring in political science, economics, and international studies.

Course requirements and grading policy

1. **Reading and participation (20%).** Each lecture is accompanied by two or three readings, typically book chapters, academic articles, or long-form journalism. Ensure you have read and digested all the readings before attending class, so you can contribute to the discussion. Your participation in class discussions will be graded. Class attendance will be tracked. *You may miss up to two class sessions with no questions asked.* Thereafter, missing classes will count heavily against your participation grade.

2. **Writing I, II: News commentaries (20% total, 10% each).** At the start of the class you will be assigned a country. (If you happen to be from a South Asian country, or have close family ties to one, you will be assigned a different country since the goal is to learn new things!) Throughout the quarter, you should stay abreast of the daily news from your assigned country. Then, twice in the quarter, you will submit a 300-word news commentary:
 - Choose a news article about a recent political or economic event in your assigned country. The event should have occurred not more than a month ago at the time of submission. Include a link to the news article at the top of your commentary.
 - Describe in no more than 300 words how the event relates to one or more of the topics we have discussed in class. The goal is to demonstrate that you can view current affairs through an analytic lens, and see how events relate to broader trends or theories.
 - Do not include a bibliography or any footnotes.

3. **Writing III, IV: Reading responses (20% total, 10% each).** Twice in the quarter, you will write a detailed response to one or more of the assigned readings for a given lecture. The two responses must be for lectures that come from two of the course's three parts (institutions, conflict, and development). Here is what a reading response should do and not do:
 - It should not be a summary of the readings.
 - Rather, it should be a *critical reflection* on the readings. This could come in several flavors: juxtaposing two readings and adjudicating a point of disagreement between them; highlighting internal contradictions within a reading's argument; pointing to an absence of empirical support for a particular claim, and suggesting either how it could be tested, or what the available evidence indicates about its veracity; suggesting an alternative interpretation of evidence presented in a reading ("While the author argues the evidence supports THAT interpretation, there are reasons to believe that THIS explanation is more plausible"); and so forth.
 - Each response must be strictly between 400 and 600 words.
 - Do not include a bibliography or any footnotes.

4. **Map quiz (10%).** At the end of Part I of the class, you will be given a blank map of South Asia and required to fill in the following from memory:
 - [India's states](#)
 - [Pakistan's provinces](#)
 - [Bangladesh's divisions](#)
 - [Sri Lanka's provinces and their capitals](#)

5. **Writing V: Final paper (30%).** Choose ONE of the questions marked as "motivating questions" in the detailed course description below. (These questions appear under the headings for each of the course's three main parts). Write a 1,500 word essay in response to the question you pick. The essay should have these features:
 - It must pose a thesis, expressed clearly in one and no more than two sentences toward the very start of the essay, and no later than the second paragraph. It should take the form, "This paper argues that. . ." or very similar. *The thesis statement must be underlined.* Papers lacking a thesis statement cannot receive a top grade.
 - It must reference ten or more of the class readings. You may cite these readings using the Harvard citation style—e.g. "The sky is blue (Jha 2018)."

- Include a bibliography only for citations that do not appear on the class syllabus. Note, you are not expected to read beyond the syllabus but may do so if you wish.
- The paper must be strictly no shorter than 1,400 words and no longer than 1,600 words. The word count does not include the bibliography but does include footnotes.
- You may have no more than five short footnotes; fewer is better.
- Top grades will be awarded to papers that present a clearly articulated, perhaps novel argument that is well supported in the body of the paper. Use signposts to tell the reader how each part of the paper contributes to your central claim.

Newspapers and periodicals

You may find the following sources helpful in keeping up with the news.

Foreign newspaper coverage:

- [New York Times](#)
- [Economist](#)

English-language dailies:

India

- [Times of India](#)
- [The Hindu](#)
- [Indian Express](#) See especially the regular columns by [Pratap Bhanu Mehta](#) and [Ashutosh Varshney](#).

Pakistan

- [Dawn](#)
- [Newline](#)

Bangladesh

- [Daily Star](#)
- [New Age](#)

Sri Lanka

- [Daily News](#)
- [The Island](#)

English-language news magazines from India:

- [India Today](#)
- [Frontline](#)
- [Outlook](#)
- [Caravan](#)

Daily digest of news from Pakistan:

- [Colin Cookman](#)

Scholarly outlets, but still with a current affairs slant:

- [Seminar](#)

- [Asian Survey](#) *The first issue of each volume provides summaries of last years' events for each country. I recommend skimming the last two years of these if you are unfamiliar with the region.*

Podcasts:

- [How To Pakistan](#)
- [The Seen and the Unseen](#)
- [Incarnations: India in 50 Lives](#)
- [In the Field](#) *Focuses on development issues in India.*
- [Indian Express: Adda](#) *In-depth interviews with prominent Indian politicians.*
- [Centre for Policy Research: Thoughtspace](#)

Academic honesty

You are expected to do your own work, and to properly attribute ideas, quotations, and sources. Please consult the university's [website on academic integrity](#).

Electronics policy

Laptops and phones are not allowed in class, except for students with disabilities by prior agreement of the instructor. Evidence suggests that students learn better when they take handwritten notes in class. The absence of laptops and phones makes for better class discussion.

Disabilities policy

Students with disabilities should please inform the instructor of any accommodations you may need. We will do everything possible to facilitate your full participation in the class.

Email policy

I will reply to emails within two business days.

Class Schedule

Thursday, 2018-09-27—Introductory lecture

There are no assigned readings for this class.

PART I: Political regimes and their origins

Motivating questions: Why is India more democratic than other countries in South Asia? What causes military coups? How did colonial rule and the process of achieving independence affect the regime paths taken by South Asian polities after 1947? To what extent are religion and democracy compatible?

Tuesday, 2018-10-02—Colonial rule, independence, and the partition of British India

Was partition avoidable?

- Metcalf, Barbara D and Thomas R Metcalf (2006). *A Concise History of Modern India*. Cambridge University Press. [Chapters 6–7](#).
- Chiriyankandath, James (1992). “Democracy under the Raj: Elections and separate representation in British India”. In: *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 30.1, pp. 39–63. [Full article](#).
- Jalal, Ayesha (1994). *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2. [Optional reading, e-reserves.]
- Optional podcasts: “[Gandhi: In the Palm of Our Hands](#)”; “[Jinnah: The Chess Player](#).”
- Optional video: [The Day India Burned](#).

Thursday, 2018-10-04—India I: The era of Congress dominance

Why do dominant parties break down?

- Corbridge, Stuart and John Harriss (2013). *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu Nationalism and Popular Democracy*. John Wiley & Sons. Chapters 3–4, e-reserves.
- Ziegfeld, Adam and Maya Tudor (2017). “How opposition parties sustain single-party dominance: Lessons from India”. In: *Party Politics* 23.3, pp. 262–273. [Optional reading](#).
- Optional podcast: “[Indira Gandhi: The Centre of Everything](#).”
- Optional video: “[The Dynasty](#).”

Tuesday, 2018-10-09—India II: The rise of the BJP

How do elite parties win mass support?

- Jaffrelot, Christophe (2009). *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader*. Princeton University Press. [Part I: Introduction](#).

- Chhibber, Pradeep and Rahul Verma (2017). “The BJP’s 2014 resurgence”. In: *Electoral Politics in India: The Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party*. Ed. by Suhas Palshikar, Sanjay Kumar and Sanjay Lodha. London: Routledge, pp. 15–33. [Full chapter](#).
- Thachil, Tariq (2014). “Elite parties and poor voters: Theory and evidence from India”. In: *American Political Science Review* 108.2, pp. 454–477. [Optional reading](#).
- *Optional podcast: “Throwing out Nehru.”*

Thursday, 2018-10-11—Pakistan

Why does the military get involved in politics?

- Jaffrelot, Christophe (2015). *The Pakistan Paradox: Instability and Resilience*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 5, e-reserves.
- Fair, C Christine (2014). *Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army’s Way of War*. Oxford University Press. [Chapter 4](#).

*****Thursday, 2018-10-11, 11:59pm—READING RESPONSE 1 DUE*****

Tuesday, 2018-10-16—Bangladesh

Can secular democracy survive in a religious society?

- Lewis, David (2011). *Bangladesh: Politics, Economy and Civil Society*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 4, e-reserves.
- Bhattacharya, France (2002). “East Bengal: Between Islam and Regional Identity”. In: *A History of Pakistan and its Origins*. Ed. by Christophe Jaffrelot. London: Anthem Press, pp. 39–60. e-reserves.
- Ruud, Arild Engelsen (2011). “Democracy in Bangladesh: A Village View”. In: *Trysts with Democracy: Political Practice in South Asia*. Ed. by Stig Toft Madsen, Kenneth Bo Nielsen and Uwe Skoda. London: Anthem Press, pp. 45–70. [*Optional reading, e-reserves*]

Thursday, 2018-10-18—Sri Lanka

How can states accommodate linguistic minorities?

- DeVotta, Neil (2010). “Politics and governance in post-independence Sri Lanka”. In: *Routledge handbook of South Asian Politics: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal*. Ed. by Paul Brass. Routledge London and New York, pp. 118–130. e-reserves.
- Shastri, Amita (1991). “Electoral competition and minority alienation in a plurality system: Sri Lanka 1947–77”. In: *Electoral Studies* 10.4, pp. 326–347. [Full article](#).
- Wickramasinghe, Nira (2014). *Sri Lanka in the Modern Age: A History*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 10. [*Optional reading, e-reserves.*]

Tuesday, 2018-10-23—Regimes in comparative perspective

Why is India more democratic than other South Asian states?

****Tuesday, 2018-10-23—MAP QUIZ IN CLASS****

- Wilkinson, Steven I (2015). *Army and Nation: The Military and Indian Democracy since Independence*. Harvard University Press. Introduction, e-reserves.
- Varshney, Ashutosh (1998). “Why democracy survives”. In: *Journal of Democracy* 9.3, pp. 36–50. [Full article](#).
- Oldenburg, Philip (2010). *India, Pakistan, and Democracy: Solving the Puzzle of Divergent Paths*. Routledge. Chapters 1 and 7. [Optional reading, e-reserves.]

PART II: Conflict, separatism, and insurgency

Motivating questions: Why has South Asia seen so much ethnic conflict? To what extent is ethnic conflict due to socio-economic factors versus elite political strategy? How has the development of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan affected the prospects for peace in South Asia? Is there a viable solution to the Kashmir conflict?

Thursday, 2018-10-25—Hindu-Muslim conflict in India

What causes ethno-religious riots?

- Brass, Paul R (2011). *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India*. University of Washington Press. Chapter 1, e-reserves.
- Jha, Saumitra (2013). “Trade, institutions, and ethnic tolerance: Evidence from South Asia”. In: *American Political Science Review* 107.4, pp. 806–832. [Full article](#).
- Engineer, Asghar Ali (1995). “Bhagalpur riot inquiry commission report”. In: *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 1729–1731. [Optional reading](#).
- [Optional video: “Ram Ke Nam.”](#)

****Thursday, 2018-10-25, 11:59pm—NEWS COMMENTARY 1 DUE****

Tuesday, 2018-10-30—Islamism and terrorism in Pakistan

What explains popular support for violent extremists?

- Blair, Graeme, C Christine Fair, Neil Malhotra and Jacob N Shapiro (2013). “Poverty and support for militant politics: Evidence from Pakistan”. In: *American Journal of Political Science* 57.1, pp. 30–48. [Full article](#).
- Ullah, Haroon K (2013). *Vying for Allah’s Vote: Understanding Islamic Parties, Political Violence, and Extremism in Pakistan*. Georgetown University Press. [Chapter 2](#).
- Rieck, Andreas (2016). *The Shias of Pakistan: An Assertive and Beleaguered Minority*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 8. [Optional reading, e-reserves.]

Thursday, 2018-11-01—Kashmir

Is there a long-term solution to the Kashmir dispute?

- Mishra, Pankaj (September–October 2000). “Death in Kashmir”, “The Birth of a Nation”, and “Kashmir: The Unending War.” In: *The New York Review of Books*.
- Staniland, Paul (2013). “Kashmir since 2003: Counterinsurgency and the Paradox of Normalcy”. In: *Asian Survey* 53.5, pp. 931–957. [Full article](#).
- Optional podcasts: “*Sheikh Abdullah: Chains of Gold*,” “*Interview with Mehbooba Mufti*.”
- Optional film: *Haider*.

Tuesday, 2018-11-06—Nuclear South Asia

Why do states develop nuclear weapons?

- Narang, Vipin (2010). “Posturing for Peace? Pakistan’s Nuclear Postures and South Asian Stability”. In: *International Security* 34.3, pp. 38–78. [Full article](#).
- Kapur, S Paul (2005). “India and Pakistan’s Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia Is Not Like Cold War Europe”. In: *International Security* 30.2, pp. 127–152. [Full article](#).
- Optional videos: [Stimson Open Online Course—Nuclear South Asia](#).

Thursday, 2018-11-08—Civil war in Sri Lanka

Why is civil war exceptionally violent?

- Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja (1992). *Buddhism Betrayed? Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka*. University of Chicago Press. pp. ix–4, 15–58, 95–101, 102–128, e-reserves.
- Thiranagama, Sharika (2011). *In my Mother’s House: Civil War in Sri Lanka*. University of Pennsylvania Press. [Chapter 1](#).
- Optional video: [Sri Lanka’s Killing Fields](#). Please note this video contains distressing images.
- Optional podcasts: [American Diplomat: “Tamil Tigers” & “Tamil Genocide”](#).

****Thursday, 2018-11-08, 11:59pm—READING RESPONSE 2 DUE****

Tuesday, 2018-11-13—Migration and nativism

How are migration and conflict linked?

- Verkaaik, Oskar (2004). *Migrants and Militants: Fun and Urban Violence in Pakistan*. Princeton University Press. [Chapter 4](#).
- Hansen, Thomas Blom (2001). *Wages of Violence: Naming and Identity in Postcolonial Bombay*. Princeton University Press. [Chapter 2](#).

PART III: Development and economic change

Motivating questions: Does state intervention help or harm economic growth and poverty alleviation? Why is political corruption so widespread in South Asia? Are mandated political reservations for marginalized groups generally beneficial?

Thursday, 2018-11-15—Corruption and vote buying

Why do voters elect corrupt politicians?

- Wade, Robert (1982). “The system of administrative and political corruption: Canal irrigation in South India”. In: *The Journal of Development Studies* 18.3, pp. 287–328. [Full article](#).
- Chauchard, Simon (2018). “Electoral Handouts in Mumbai Elections: The Cost of Political Competition”. In: *Asian Survey* 58.2, pp. 341–364. [Full article](#).
- Transparency International (2014). *Fighting Corruption in South Asia: Building Accountability*.

Tuesday, 2018-11-20—Natural environment

How capable are states of managing environmental threats?

- Sahni, Hamir K (2006). “The politics of water in South Asia: The case of the Indus Waters Treaty”. In: *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 26.2, pp. 153–165. [Full article](#).
- Weightman, Barbara A (2011). *Dragons and Tigers: A Geography of South, East, and Southeast Asia*. John Wiley and Sons. Chapter 9, e-reserves.
- The New York Times Editorial Board (November 12, 2017). “Choking on Air in New Delhi.”

*****Tuesday, 2018-11-20, 11:59pm—NEWS COMMENTARY 2 DUE*****

Tuesday, 2018-11-27—Caste

Does political representation improve the welfare of minorities?

- Jensenius, Francesca R (2015). “Mired in reservations: The path-dependent history of electoral quotas in India”. In: *The Journal of Asian Studies* 74.1, pp. 85–105. [Full article](#).
- Chandra, Kanchan (2000). “The transformation of ethnic politics in India: The decline of Congress and the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party in Hoshiarpur”. In: *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59.1, pp. 26–61. [Full article](#).
- Bayly, Susan (2001). *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1. [Optional reading, e-reserves.]
- Optional podcast: “*Bhimrao Ambedkar: Building Palaces on Dung Heaps*.”

Thursday, 2018-11-29—Gender

Why are women under-represented in politics?

- Shehabuddin, Elora (2014). “Gender and democratic politics in Bangladesh”. In: *Routledge Handbook of Gender in South Asia*. Ed. by Leela Fernandes. Routledge, pp. 82–95. e-reserves.
- Chattopadhyay, Raghendra and Esther Duflo (2004). “Women as policy makers: Evidence from a randomized policy experiment in India”. In: *Econometrica* 72.5, pp. 1409–1443. [Full article](#).

Tuesday, 2018-12-04—Economic liberalization

Why do governments undertake economic liberalization?

- The New York Times (June 25, 2018). [“How China Got Sri Lanka to Cough Up a Port.”](#)
- Kohli, Atul (2006). “Politics of economic growth in India, 1980-2005: Part II: The 1990s and beyond”. In: *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 1361–1370. [Full article](#).
- Jenkins, Rob (1999). *Democratic Politics and Economic Reform in India*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 1, e-reserves.
- Kohli, Atul (2006). “Politics of economic growth in India, 1980-2005: Part I: The 1980s”. In: *Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 1251–1259. [Optional reading](#).

Thursday, 2018-12-06—Poverty alleviation

Do states help or hinder poverty alleviation?

- Bhagwati, Jagdish and Arvind Panagariya (2013). *Why Growth Matters: How Economic Growth in India Reduced Poverty and the Lessons for Other Developing Countries*. Hachette UK. Chapter 1, e-reserves.
- Sen, Amartya K (2001). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford University Press. Chapter 7, e-reserves.
- The Economist (November 3, 2012). [“Bangladesh and development: The path through the fields.”](#)

*****Friday, 2018-12-07, 11.59pm—FINAL PAPER DUE*****