

selves in an “ambivalent situation”, since a greater awareness of the ecological contamination could lead believers to doubt the goddess Ganga, thereby weakening the role of the priests (pp. 365–66). Despite these risks, all of those interviewed considered the overcoming of the separation between the religious and ecological dimension – along with the fight against corruption – to be the key to successful environmental protection measures.

Of particular interest are Lena Zühlke’s critical comments on the role of the daily press, which provides only superficial reporting with a strong religious bias, as well as her critical view of the role of local NGOs, which in her opinion, with few exceptions, are poorly networked, merely criticising the measures taken by the GAP and making demands out of proportion to their influence (p. 375). The author convincingly emphasises the fact that the “actual causes of the pollution” from industry as well as the failure of governmental agencies (p. 426) are often pushed into the background of public discussion, “drowned out” (p. 427) by the stronger focus on pollution from religious practices. Overall, the book persuades the interested reader – despite the occasional lengthy passage – through its differentiated consideration of the interrelationships analysed.

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GREGOR HAIN, *Die Sicherheit und Stabilität Indiens. Historische, politische und wirtschaftliche Herausforderungen.* (Moderne Südasiestudien – Gesellschaft, Politik, Wirtschaft, 2). Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015. 534 pages, €98.00. ISBN 978-3-8487-1754-5

The stability of India’s democracy for more than 60 years has become the subject of a lively academic debate. Gregor Hain raises the question of the extent to which India can still be regarded as “stable and secure” (p. 27) given the enormous political and economic challenges that the country is facing. The author uses an extended concept of security and a comprehensive framework of analysis. His main interest is directed towards three areas: The first is India’s historical development, the second is the role of religion – especially the relationship between Hinduism and Islam – and the last is the persistence and impact of social revolutionary movements (pp. 28–30). In his theoretical approach, Hain emphasises theories of international relations but also points out the shortcomings of applying Western theories to non-Western societies (pp. 32ff).

The book is structured in five chapters. After the introduction, the author gives a detailed analysis of the concepts of “security” and “terrorism” (p. 51). The third chapter deals with Indian history until independence in 1947. The following chapter outlines the development of Hinduism and Islam and their impact on India’s society. Chapter five on “India’s Security and Stability” includes the main empirical data and deals with religious conflicts and their

regional repercussions with Pakistan, as well as the variety of ethnic conflicts in the Northeast and their impact on relations with Bangladesh, China and Myanmar. The last part of the chapter analyses the Maoist (Naxalite) rebellion and its impact on bilateral relations with Nepal.

The strength of Hain's volume lies in its analysis of the different domestic conflicts and their regional and international repercussions. He offers a very broad and detailed analysis of the Kashmir conflict, the challenges posed by Hindu-Muslim communalism, the complex conflict constellations in the Northeast and the persistence of Maoist movements in some of the rural areas in India.

Comprehensive volumes such as Hain's book always provoke critical inquiries. Although the author defines his understanding of a broad concept of security, his second main concept, i.e. "stability", remains relatively vague. Moreover, some of his findings seem to be overstretched. First, it is not clearly explained why the creation of Pakistan, which challenged India's secular and democratic model, was the "decisive problem" for India ("entscheidendes Problem", p. 498). Pakistan's state idea failed with the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Moreover, India has a far better democratic record than Pakistan. Second, equating the Indian and the Pakistan states in their support for Hindu extremist and Islamic extremist tendencies respectively (p. 501) seems to overshoot the mark. There appears to be more than a qualitative and quantitative difference in the decades-long support by the Pakistani security forces of militant groups which remain outside any meaningful democratic control compared to the occasional tolerance by state governments in India of communal riots against religious minorities in some instances.

Finally, one may also not necessarily share the pessimistic view of the author that India is still not "a full-fledged democratic and secular nation-state" (p. 510). It seems that India has developed its own understanding of concepts such as democracy and secularism which are, of course, different from Western understandings. Surveys have shown that Indians have a great trust and confidence in their democratic setup and think it is the best suited for their country no matter what outside observers believe.

Hain's critical assessment of the repercussions of Hindu extremist views on India's social fabric are a timely contribution to contemporary debates in the country. Unfortunately, some of his conclusions are not fully supported by his own analysis. In order to foster regional stability in South Asia, he calls for future research to focus on topics such as regional security cooperation (p. 512) in order to deal with the transnational challenges posed by militant networks. Hain's volume offers a comprehensive overview and analysis of the different security challenges that India is facing, both on the domestic and the regional level.

*Christian Wagner*