

Stephen P. Cohen, one of the most experienced and prominent scholars on India, has analysed the changes in India during the last decade and their consequences for the country's international status. In ten chapters he highlights the transformations in India on the domestic as well as on the regional and international level. His argument is that India will emerge as a new "great power" (p. 35) and will play a much more significant role in the international system.

Although some readers may miss a more refined theoretical framework, Cohen's volume is clearly structured along various 'levels of analysis'. The first chapter gives a historical and statistical account that goes from caste to military power in order to make a first assessment in "situating India" (p. 7ff). Chapters two and three deal with individual and institutional levels. On the basis of long professional experience Cohen analyses the "World View of India's Strategic Elite" (p. 36ff) and looks at the institutional constraints of India's foreign policy decision making. Chapters four to six focus on the domestic situation and India's capabilities as a military and nuclear power. In chapters seven to nine the author switches to the international level. First, Cohen deals exclusively with India-Pakistan relations, that are undoubtedly the most dangerous dyad in the present international system. But Cohen also highlights India's aspirations as an Asian Power (p. 229ff). Here he differentiates between different circles that encompass South Asia as well as West, Central and Southeast Asia. In this chapter Cohen also deals with China, asking whether it can be seen as "Model, Rival or Ally?" (p. 256) of India.

Chapter nine is reserved for India-U.S. relations. Cohen does not only cover security aspects like the role of Pakistan or the nuclear question but also points to the new social and economic ties (p. 287). Although Indian policy makers tend to perceive India and the U.S. more and more as 'natural allies', Cohen is also aware of the differences in the bilateral relationship. The final chapter "India Rising" (p. 299) includes some recommendations for U.S. foreign policy makers. Cohen sees the common democratic values as the "core" of the new bilateral relations (p. 316). He also advocates a more active role of the U.S. in Kashmir. This may be regarded as an external incursion that India has always rejected, but a settlement of the issue may help increase India's international status and power in the long run.

Cohen's book is an excellent study, presenting strong and convincing arguments about the dynamics of India's transformations in the 1990s and their impact on the country's international role. It remains to be seen whether India's policy makers are able to use these new opportunities to achieve their long cherished aspiration for a more prominent status in the international system.

*Christian Wagner*

SIRI GAMAGE, I.B. WATSON (eds.), *Conflict and Community in Contemporary Sri Lanka. 'Pearl of the East' or the 'Island of Tears'?* (Studies on Contemporary South Asia, 3). New Delhi/Thousand Oaks/London: Sage Publications, 1999. XI, 356 pages. ISBN 0-7619-9393-2 (US, hb.) / 81-7036-863-4 (India, hb.)

This book seems to appear several years too late. It was published first as a series of articles in the journal *South Asia*, and was made into an edited volume in 1999. By the time it could have reached an audience in 2000, the military successes of the LTTE had turned into the hesitant beginnings of a peace process that is fortunately still under way. Nevertheless, the contributions to this volume furnish a useful, and sobering picture of the situation and perceptions in Sri Lanka during the late nineties and the difficulties concerned observers faced in getting a dialogue and peace process going.

The articles have different approaches and foci and also vary very much in quality. They are grouped under four headings: the political economy of the conflict, the story of the conflict through narratives, costs of the conflict and the conflict in different perspectives.

Of these, the first and the third furnish material that is still not outdated and very useful because the economic causes and costs of the ethnic conflict have not often been outlined in such detail. In the last consequence, it was precisely economic considerations that led the conflicting parties to the negotiating table.

After the editors' introduction to the volume the first part discusses the possibility of peace, the colonial heritage of space – centre and periphery as a possible contributing cause to the conflict –, the biased perception or non-perception of the conflict by the media, both local and international. Rohan Gunaratne outlines here – in a shortened version of one of his books – his usual conspiracy theories – later repeated *ad nauseam* – that connect the LTTE to practically every militant and/or terrorist group on the globe, beginning with the Sikhs and not ending with Al Qaida. As is also usual with this author, documentary and other evidence for his statements is conspicuous by its absence. While shortly after September 11, Gunaratne had his fifteen minutes of media fame as a self-appointed expert on terrorism, holding forth on terrorism in general and Al Qaida in particular, predicting all sorts of dire scenarios that never came to pass, he has now deservedly – and hopefully permanently – been forgotten.

The second part of the book is harrowing, though it retraces actions and events unfortunately quite well-known to this reviewer. But the accounts rendered never fail to shock and sadden. Margaret Trawick endeavours to interpret and find meaning in the violence, both active and passive, of the LTTE and particularly its women fighters. What is remarkable here is the evaluation of death and killing by the fighters: to kill is a job that has to be done, maybe in the tradition of Arjuna in the Mahabharata, but to be killed is true heroism that makes one into a great hero and a martyr and should thus be aspired after.

Michele Gamburd describes how even in death and its rituals local and personal rivalries intersect with the purportedly national project, and Patricia Lawrence and Mark Whitaker show how religion and its role are defined in certain new ways in the face of military repression, torture and a general feeling of helplessness and exposure to events over which one lacks even minimal control. Similarly, Dennis McGilvray describes how the relations between Muslims and Tamils are redefined in the light of an ongoing conflict that pits former neighbours against each other – or perhaps not. The descriptions of torture, suffering and helplessness in these accounts are chilling, particularly the suite for

Kokodicholai by Marilyn Krysl. Unfortunately, she does not say whether these are her own poems or translated from the Tamil. In any case, they are dark, poignant and full of the numbing sorrow and suffering the people in the east are going through.

In the two articles of the third part the costs of the war in military terms which are considerable are taken up by P. Edirisuriya, and J. Bandara outlines the general economic consequences with the important example of reduced revenue from tourism especially after the war reached Colombo.

The articles in the fourth part are, as the title indicates, disparate. They start off with some remarks by Meghan O'Sullivan on the role and political perceptions of the Muslims in the southwest regarding the conflict. These are mediated, but still important for all that. H.L.D. Mahindapala furnishes a disjointed and somewhat delirious article in which he raves about the alleged denigration of the Sinhalese throughout history not only by the Tamils but practically the whole world. They have been put down, repressed, misjudged as regards their capabilities and generally hard done by, all of which seems, in his eyes, to justify the murderous attacks on Tamils in the eighties and nineties. While the Sinhalese were fair to the Tamils, they, or so he claims, were consistently betrayed not only by foreigners, the Christian churches and the Muslims, but even by their own leaders. He therefore sees no reason to grant the Tamils anything at all. This culminates in his claim at the end of his article that the Sinhalese are mentally and physically superior in everything from mathematics to cricket!

The last two articles by Siri Hettige and Siri Gamage endeavour to look at the conflict from a perspective which has in the last fifteen years gone somewhat out of fashion, viz. economic and class analysis. While Hettige emphasises the role of globalisation in polarising the haves and have-nots in vulnerable countries, which then often leads to a realignment of class and ethnicity, he also assigns to local groups which benefit from international NGOs, an interest in keeping alive and even fuelling conflicts for personal and/or institutional interest. Gamage's analysis, in terms of class, of intra-Sinhalese conflicts since independence and his interpretation of the role of the JVP in this scenario is persuasive. Again, the linkages between globalising tendencies, especially on a personal and group level, and the emergence of intra-societal conflicts, are remarkable. However, for the Tamils, his analysis remains somewhat weak and unconvincing, because he tries to transpose his findings within Sinhalese society onto Tamil society. However, here, somewhat different alignments and interests seem to have operated, especially and precisely because of government discrimination after independence. This is not to say that Tamil society might not also be usefully analysed in class categories, as shown by Sivathamby in the seventies.

Even though overtaken by events, this study still provides useful reading, especially for historians and political scientists interested in the roots of conflict as a precondition for its solution.

*Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam*