

Kristin M. Bakke, *Decentralization and Intrastate Struggles: Chechnya, Punjab, & Quebec* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 322.

Bethany Lacina, *Rival Claims: Ethnic Violence and Territorial Autonomy under Indian Federalism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), pp. 261.

The state of Punjab witnessed a bloody Sikh ethnonationalist insurgency in the 1980s and early-1990s. The so-called “Punjab problem” challenged, if only temporarily, the notion of the Sikhs as being the model of a nationalistic minority community and also raised questions about how a comparatively prosperous province within the Indian Union could be the site a violent separatist struggle. Much has been written on the “Punjab problem” and Sikh separatism, and the two books under review add to this extensive academic literature with their unique analytical and theoretical approaches. Thus, they are welcomed additions.

These two books share much in common. First, both are written by political scientists and their empirical analysis is squarely couched within the existing theoretical literature in the field. Second, the two books deal with the relationship between ethnonationalist violence and decentralization/federalism in multi-ethnic polities. Third, the primary purpose of each book is not necessarily to explain the “Punjab crisis” but rather to contribute to the wider theoretical literature in political science. Nonetheless, Punjab is one of case studies analyzed in each book. Finally, as implied in the previous point, both books take a comparative approach for analysis, utilizing other empirical case studies in addition to Punjab to develop their empirical findings and make their theoretical contributions. These four characteristics of both books help define both the strengths and weaknesses of each. The weakness for a Punjab area-specialist is that neither offers an in-depth analysis of the “Punjab crisis”. On the other hand, the strength for a political scientist is that the theoretical and comparative approach of each offers a fresh analysis of the “Punjab problem”, couched within wider questions of decentralization and the dynamics of political competition within multi-ethnic (or multi-national) polities. As a result, the comparative approach informed by theory utilized in both offers important and unique insights into the causal dynamics behind the “Punjab problem”. In my analysis, these strengths vastly outweigh any potential weaknesses in both books.

Bakke attempts to tackle the question of whether decentralization of power within multi-ethnic polities forestalls or, alternatively, instigates separatist ethnic violence. As she points out, proponents of decentralization argue that it helps integrate peripheral ethnic groups into the wider polity by combining shared rule in the center with increased self-rule at the provincial level. In contrast, opponents contend that federalism provides ethnic groups with the material resources and network of institutions to aggressively challenge the

central state. Bakke criticizes and, as a result, avoids this bifurcated debate, but instead offers a much more nuanced conceptualization. In particular, she argues that decentralization does not work in isolation from the specific nature of the society and polity in question. As a result, “while decentralization may help preserve peace in one country or in one region, it may have just the opposite effect in a country or region with different social and economic characteristics” (p. 4). By “social characteristics,” Bakke means ethnic composition and by “economic characteristics” she implies patterns of wealth. Furthermore, she operationalizes “decentralization” by disaggregating it into three different types - cultural policy autonomy, fiscal economic autonomy, and political elite ties, referring to nature of elite integration (or the lack thereof). Bakke offers a series of testable hypotheses regarding each type of decentralization, and their prospects for fostering either peace or violence. In short, she argues that policy and fiscal autonomy can either contain or foster self-determination conflicts by affecting levels of grievance and calculations about the cost/benefits of remaining within the multi-ethnic polity. Furthermore, the existence (or lack thereof) of political channels of communication and mutual interest between ethnic and central elites affects whether grievances transform into violence or not.

In her book, Lacina examines the claims on territorial autonomy made by various groups within multi-ethnic polities, particularly in India. This includes not only demands for secession, but also the creation of additional federated units (e.g., states or autonomous local areas) within the federalized polity. More importantly, she challenges the traditional formulation that conflict simply occurs between peripheral groups and the central state. Instead, Lacina conceptualizes the issue as a tripartite power struggle between different ethnic groups in the peripheral region, neighboring regions and states, and the central government. In this equation, according to Lacina, the center does not always play a neutral role, but rather a partisan one by backing the faction or groups which serve its own interests. That is, “the center’s choices for governing the periphery primarily reflect its political relationships with rival claimants there. Those political relationships, not a fixed preference for centralization or decentralization, determine the national executive’s choice of whether to accommodate or repress demands for autonomy” (p. 6). The leaders of various peripheral groups also attempt to understand the interests of the center, and choose to mobilize/fight or back down based on their assessments of the center’s motivations and strength. The dependent variable(s) in her study is when do ethnic autonomy movements turn violent and when do they succeed. After delineating multiple testable hypotheses, Lacina reaches several important empirical conclusions. First, peripheral ethnic elites use militancy to create pressure for their goals when the prime minister lacks clear electoral reasons to favor one regional group over another. Second, ethnic groups rarely mobilize for violence or win autonomy in regions in which electorally influential anti-autonomy interests also exist. Finally, regional ethnic elites can deter autonomy demands within their borders and even actively discriminate against minorities when they are electorally important to the prime minister. In short, the ruling

power in the center allows (or disallows) autonomy depending on its interests, and peripheral ethnic groups pursue their demands based on their assessment of being political influential to the ruling coalition in the center.

Bakke's study is highly structured in which she compares three different cases with contrasting outcomes - Chechnya (violent separatism until the state's military victory), Punjab (violence at one period and the lack thereof in other periods), and Quebec (no violence). In contrast, Lacina uses a more eclectic approach comparing and contrasting numerous autonomy struggles including Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Gorkhaland, and numerous others from the Northeast. Both studies also have empirical chapters devoted to large-n quantitative analysis to test their hypotheses - Bakke's internationally and Lacina's related to India as a whole - in addition to the in-depth qualitative case study chapters.

Regarding Punjab, Bakke argues that the *Punjabi Suba* movement of the 1950s/1960s (and the granting of this demand for decentralization) succeeded in forestalling violence because it was a movement for cultural policy autonomy for an ethnic group and other groups in the region (e.g. Hindus of the Haryana region) supported the demand for their own interests. The situation was different in the 1980s with the Akali Dal's demand for the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR). The Akali Dal, according to Bakke, represented the interests of the relatively rich and prosperous landowning Sikhs who demanded more fiscal autonomy for the entire state because their continued prosperity was supposedly being constrained by India's highly-centralized fiscal system. The Akali Dal's specific demands - such as the sharing of river waters - involved other neighboring Indian states which made them more difficult for the central government to grant, in contrast to the cultural policy autonomy demanded earlier during the *Punjabi Suba* movement. Furthermore, as Bakke argues, the nature of political elite ties and integration was relatively weak during the 1980s with the Akali Dal clearly at odds with Mrs. Gandhi's Congress central government. As a result the Akali Dal persisted aggressively for policy decentralization and the central government was entrenched in its unwillingness to grant more autonomy, which led the political impasse to move quickly toward violence with the rise of Sikh militancy. The dynamics became worse after Operation Bluestar when demands for decentralization (e.g., Khalistan) were based on the perceived physical survival of the community (and Indian Union), as opposed to only cultural issues as in the 1960s. The results of these dynamics are well-known with the loss of over 25,000 militancy-related deaths during the 1980s and 1990s.

Lacina makes a similar argument regarding Punjab. She argues that the main factor in forestalling violence was not necessarily Mrs. Gandhi's inherent drive to centralize power, but rather her unwillingness to incur the political costs of settling with the Akalis by alienating the leaders (and voters) of the neighboring states of Haryana and Rajasthan. The Akali Dal was a powerful political party in Punjab with a high degree of support within the Sikh community. Thus, it could afford to challenge Mrs. Gandhi, with a reasonable degree of confidence in its ability to wrestle elements of the ASR from Mrs. Gandhi. For this reason,

the Akali Dal resorted to mobilization and implicit threats of violence. Yet, the demands it set forth by the Akali Dal in the ASR would likely have adversely affected the neighboring states of Haryana and Rajasthan, which Mrs. Gandhi calculated were vitally important electorally for her to stay in power due to their large Hindu-majorities. As a result, the repeated rounds of negotiations with the Akalis failed, which allowed Sikh radicals to become increasingly powerful. Mrs. Gandhi eventually opted for a military solution in the form of Operation Bluestar which further helped consolidate her electoral support base in North India, but also resulted in a decade of violence and insurgency in Punjab.

In conclusion, the academic value of the two books under review for Sikh and Punjab studies is not necessarily the actual empirical conclusions they reach. That is, the argument that the “Punjab crisis” could not be settled due to the competing political interests of the various political stakeholders is not new. In fact, this argument has been made in numerous other studies on the topic as well. Instead, the value of these two books for Punjab specialists is *how* these conclusions are reached. To explain, Bakke’s use of the theoretical literature linking decentralization and intrastate violence, and Lacina’s conceptual framework emphasizing the tripartite nature of rival claims on territorial autonomy make the basis for their respective empirical conclusions clear and explicit within a comparative analytical framework. Thus, it is not only *what* we know, but *how* we know it and *why* it is important to know within that particular theoretical framework that matters more. After all, it is the particular theoretical framework used that helps to contextualize the empirical facts and their wider analytical importance. In this respect, the books by Bakke and Lacina are must reads for those interested in contemporary Sikh politics and the “Punjab crisis”. They also make important contributions to the existing theoretical literature in political science, and are likely to lead to further empirical and conceptual refinement on important issues of intrastate conflict, decentralization and autonomy, and contentious politics in both India and beyond.

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Joginder Singh, *Religious Pluralism in Punjab: A Contemporary Account of Sikh Sants, Babas, Gurus, and Satgurus*, (London: Routledge, 2018), 432pp.

While this monograph ranges over quite a bit of material, it focuses most intently on seven religious groups that are, to varying degrees, on the margins of the Sikh mainstream - Udasis, Seva Panthis, Niramalas, Nirankaris, Namdharis, Neeldharis, and Nanaksaris (Chapters 2-4, pp. 72-314). Singh also provides a chapter on various *gurdwaras* and *deras* that have affiliations to particular *sants* and *babas* (Chapter 5, pp. 315-384). These include information on Hoti Mardan, Damdami Taksal, Santgarh/Harkhowal, Mastuana, and Akhand Kirtani Jatha. What ties these groups together, according to Singh, is that while they all, to some extent, “believe in the ten Sikh Gurus and their scriptures, *Gurbilas* and *Rahitnama*,” they have also developed their own innovative theologies, rituals,

and codes of conduct. These groups provide pluralism to Sikhism that Singh finds essential to the character of Punjab. Certainly, sometimes these innovations come into conflict with the mainstream Sikh establishment. Singh, certainly does not shy away from the more difficult moments these groups have had and continue to have with the SGPC and the Akal Takht. At other times, the innovations of these groups dovetail nicely with mainstream Sikh theology and goals. In this book, Singh is more concerned with the consonances rather than the dissonances. Thus, he organizes the book as an evolving series of relationships between the margins and the mainstream which are at the heart of Sikh and Punjabi pluralism.

Singh begins the study by nodding to the extraordinary religious diversity in Punjab with brief snapshots of both the Punjabi Muslim and Punjabi Hindu communities (Chapter 1: Introduction). But he quickly moves to Sikhism itself and hints that the very foundation of Sikhism was marked by pluralism (Chapter 2: Setting Pluralism in Sikh Faith). He then moves to the “continuity” of that pluralism (Chapter 3: Continuity of Pluralism in Sikh Faith), the ways in which that pluralism might “enrich” Sikhism and Punjabi society (Chapter 4: Enriching Pluralism in Sikh Faith), and finally to how this pluralism has moved towards a more assertive “Khalsa identity” in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries (Chapter 5: Moving Towards Khalsa Identity). Singh’s implicit argument here - that pluralism is both foundational and essential to the Sikh tradition - might be a challenge for those who adhere to a stricter definition of what is and is not Sikhism, but it is an argument worth exploring.

This book will be useful for two different audiences and, at times, reads like two different books combined into one. For those unfamiliar with the seven central groups, Singh provides a brief historical introduction to each. There is not much new in these histories, but Singh has done an admirable job of collecting diverse material (much of it in Punjabi) and putting it in one place. The histories of the *Udasis*, *Seva Panthis*, and *Nirmalas* are collected in Chapter 2 (pp. 72-126), the histories of the *Nirankaris* and *Namdharis* are found in the first half of Chapter 4 (pp. 222-256), and the histories of the *Neeldharis* and *Nanaksaris* are interwoven throughout the latter half of Chapter 4 (pp. 257-314).

However, what I see as a more significant contribution to the scholarship of Sikhism and religion in Punjab is Singh’s research into the contemporary scene. This material is interlaced with the above histories and can be found on pp. 130-220, 257-314, and 316-384. Singh visited countless sites and interviewed key members of the establishments under study. His main source for his final chapter on the *sants* and *babas* attached to *gurdwaras* and *deras* is the Ludhiana-based Punjabi daily, *Ajit*. Even someone with significant knowledge of Sikhism and its offshoots will find new material here. It is arranged like a traditional gazetteer in that there is no map. The volume would be even more useful if one was included in the next edition, with each site given a heading, including its name and location, followed by descriptions of the grounds and physical structures, any oral history obtained, and observations concerning particularly innovative theologies, rituals, or codes of conduct. Thus, like a gazetteer, it is probably best

read as a guide, to be ingested in bits and pieces, rather than as a continuous narrative, as the sheer volume of names, places, and detailed micro-histories start to run together if taken in all at once. For those unfamiliar with the Sikh tradition and the geography of Punjab, these sections might be quite disorienting. Further, the reader should pay close attention to both the notes and apparatus as well; Singh includes interesting and enlightening nuggets in the most unexpected places.

Perhaps this volume will be most useful to graduate students looking for dissertation topics. That is, while Singh provides an overview of the contemporary scene, he covers so many groups - at least twelve by my count and this does not include side comments on other groups such as the Dhirmalis, Minas, Hindalis, etc. - and visits to so many sites (at least 52 by my count, but there are more that receive passing mentions or are identified in lists) that he sacrifices depth for breadth. But in doing so, Singh has provided a foundation and road map for a series of more in-depth studies. For example, Singh limits his interviews to the most prominent members of each group, and thus the field is wide open for a young scholar to spend significant time at just a few of these sites interviewing not just the leaders, but the lay members of the community.

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Birinder Pal Singh, *Sikhs in the Deccan and North-East India*, (London: Routledge, 2018), 239 pp.

Following the pioneering studies of Himadri Bannerjee, Nidar Singh Nihang, and Parmjit Singh, Birinder Pal Singh's fascinating new monograph attempts to address a lacuna in Sikh studies by focusing upon those Sikhs who live in southern and eastern India, the Deccani and Axomiya Sikhs. These are Sikhs who reside within India but who are the most distant from today's Punjab. Although both areas are within Sikh sacred territory as the two were sanctified by visits by the Sikh Gurus - the First, Ninth, and Tenth respectively in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - few Sikhs outside of these areas take the time to visit these sites. The exception is the town of Nanded in the southern Maharashtra at which the Tenth Guru died in 1708 and the popularity of which surged after the 300th anniversary of the foundation of the Khalsa in 1999. The Sikhs in these distant locations, put another way, form a Sikh diaspora in the homeland of the Sikhs - a point that reverberates throughout Birinder Pal Singh's study. This also provokes a comparison with the situation we discover regarding Sikhs in Pakistan today.

Such insights notwithstanding, what strikes one immediately about the book (especially for a historian such as me) is that it is predominately quantitative, and this is clearly where its strength lies. It often reverts to a micro study of Sikhs in many of the districts and towns of the northeast and south, and provides a dizzying array of statistics regarding, for example, household income, adherence to the traditional symbols of the Sikh tradition (the Five Ks), participation in

Sikh and local festivals (Baisakhi and Bihu respectively), and knowledge of Punjabi to make its points. And although these factors may show a community that is vibrant and quite diverse, there is nevertheless a commonality which connects them apart from their obviously religious credentials and that is that almost all of the Sikhs residing in these areas trace their movement to them originally from the Punjab. Northeastern Sikhs relay on an origin story which saw their ancestors move to the area in the nineteenth century in order to aid the then Ahom king against Burmese invaders. Deccani Sikhs too trace their homeland to the Punjab but offer two competing stories as to their arrival - one, that Sikhs in the south are descended from those first Sikhs who accompanied Guru Gobind Singh to the area in the early eighteenth century and two, to those Sikhs who were the original *Jami'at-i Sikhān* or Sikh irregular force sent by Maharaja Ranjit Singh to help the Hyderabad ruler Chandu Lal who some Sikh scholars consider to have been a Nanakpanthi Sikh.

The text provides a keen insight into the tradition as practiced in these distant regions and the people by whom these are practiced. A good portion of the text thus notes how these Sikhs have been integrated into the dominant culture of their areas, celebrated as “sons of the soil” in the northeast for example by fighting for Assamese self-determination and, in some instances, even dying for it. The same may be said for the Sikhs of the Deccan. These Sikhs, the study ultimately concludes, demonstrate how Sikhs living in both areas challenge the many dearly held stereotypes of the Guru’s Panth - for example, the Sikh predisposition towards agricultural labor, Sikh thrift and wealth, and the contemporary Sikh tie to the Punjab. At the same time, Birinder Pal Singh also introduces many readers to several intriguing subgroups within the larger Sikh Panth including the schedule-caste Sikligars (from the term *saiqal* “polish”), Banjaras (from *vanaj* “trade”: called Luvanas or “salt” merchants in the Punjab), and those who are known in the northeast as *safai karamcharis* generally referred to as “sweepers.” The focus on these groups, Birinder Pal Singh often notes, demonstrates that there are indeed low-caste, poverty-stricken Sikhs throughout India despite Punjabi Sikh claims to the contrary. Indeed, he makes a repeated point of saying that, for Punjabi Sikhs (both those recently arrived in the area and those back in the Punjab) and especially Punjabi Jat Sikhs, these northeastern and southerners are not true, genuine (*pukkā* or *aslī*) Sikhs but rather *kachā* (impure, spoiled) Sikhs or, worse still, “duplicate” Sikhs (*naql* or *naqlī*). As intimated in the textual work of Pashaura Singh, these groups who are always marginalized by Punjabi Sikhs and within Sikh studies, may yet have an important role to play in our understanding of Sikh history generally - a point made forcefully by the discovery of the *Vanajara pothi* just outside of Ludhiana which is claimed to be a draft copy of the sacred Sikh scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib.

At the micro level, the study sheds much light on the situation of Sikhs in these regions. This work is to be commended for describing these Sikhs in its five chapters, bookended with an introduction and conclusion. My main complaint with the work, however, regards its qualitative dimension. Indeed,

whenever the author shifts from quantifying to qualifying, the narrative slips into clichés and caricatures that have long been interrogated by scholars of South Asian realities. This includes the idea that Sikhs still adhere to discriminatory caste standards despite the teachings of the Sikh Gurus solely because of the powerful force of Hindu traditions (page 110), while the ideal Sikh identity broadcast by the SGPC is often parroted as “superior.” This last implication is despite the fact that one hears in Birinder Pal Singh’s voice definite sympathy for the less economically stable Sikhs of the northeast and south. While Punjabi Sikhs highlight what they see as shortcomings or disingenuousness on the part of northeastern and southern Sikhs, Sikhs of these areas nevertheless consider themselves *pukka* or perfect Sikhs.

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Chhanda Chatterjee, *The Sikh Minority and the Partition of the Punjab, 1920-1947* (London: Routledge, 2019) 233 pp.

The partition of Punjab has raised several lingering academic and political debates, particularly in relation to the Sikh community. For example, one section of academics and politicians asks why the Sikh political leadership during that period could not agitate more vigorously and successfully for the attainment of a separate state for the Sikhs (i.e., Khalistan), especially when the Muslim League was able to achieve Pakistan and the Indian National Congress secured India? Another section attempts to prove that particular factions of the Sikh leadership were “anti-national” because they raised voices in support a separate Sikh state. Chhanda Chatterjee’s book is an unprejudiced, comprehensive, and precise attempt to shed light on this long-standing intellectual and historical debate. The book primarily examines the aspirations, compulsions, and available choices for the Sikhs during the period from 1920 to 1947 when the various “communities” in India (including the Hindus and Muslims) faced quickly-changing political circumstances and could acquire political power only through their sheer numbers under the prevailing democratic norms. This was a particularly important question for the Sikhs, being a numerically small community but one with disproportionate political clout. The book also examines the changing attitude of the British authorities, opportunist positions of the Indian National Congress, and shrewd stances of the Muslim League in regard to the political concerns and aspirations of the Sikhs.

While adopting the “simple to complex” and “general to specific” approaches, the author starts knitting her thesis by narrating the period during which a unique Sikh identity crystallized in the late-nineteenth century. During this period, the Sikhs faced severe challenges from a number of Hindu socio-religious organizations such as the Arya Samaj at the social/religious level and from the Indian National Congress at the political level. The latter wanted Sikhs to be counted as a sect of Hindus in order to strengthen the numerical strength of the party in reserved electorates on communal bases. As the author points out,

the Sikhs, while being a distinctive but numerically weak minority, had to struggle for their (dis)proportionate political representation in Punjab because the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League were competing vigorously with each other in the struggle for political power. The Sikhs, who had been patronised by the British for their extraordinary military proficiency to help mitigate internal challenges, were abandoned by them in the lead up to Partition.

The author further argues that supporting the minority-specific aspirations of Sikh political organizations was contradictory to the political interests of the Indian National Congress, because it was a national political party dominated by Hindu leadership with the implicit political goal of representing the Hindu majority in India. Sikh leaders were lured by influential leaders of the Indian National Congress with verbal commitments to protect their political interests, but were subsequently ditched for political expediency. During 1945-46, the Muslim League fabricated the plan to create Pakistan and partition the province of Punjab into two parts. During these trying times, the Sikh leaders, abandoned by the British and betrayed by the Indian National Congress, had no option but to fight a political battle for securing their identity and community aspirations. Chatterjee argues that a faction of the Sikh leadership raised the voice for the attainment of separate state because of the frustration of being exploited, abandoned and deceived from all sides. Sikh leaders had a number of arguments for claiming the province of Punjab including their enormous contributions to revenue generation, industry, and the army. Furthermore, Punjab was the only “homeland” of the Sikhs and Sikhism, which had been ruled by them before the British conquest. But, despite these justifications, the socio-political conditions of those times were unfavourable for the Sikhs. Demographically, they were not a majority in any district of Punjab, and politically they were not united and were affiliated with various political parties. For example, a large portion of the Sikh electorate was associated either with the Indian National Congress or the Unionist Party, in addition to being affiliated with the almost exclusively Sikh-based Akali Dal, Chief Khalsa Diwan, and/or Khalsa National Party.

Narrating the major causes behind the Sikhs’ failure to secure their desired political aspirations during the time of the Partition, the author concludes that the Sikh political leadership failed to anticipate and appreciate the changing political circumstances of the times and hence was unable to take the appropriately strategic political positions required to achieve its goals. As the author argues, democratic norms had no respect for the Sikhs’ extra-numerical contributions and provided them with additional weightage on the eve of Partition. Furthermore, they lagged behind the other two major communities in a ruthless numbers game, in which no amount of extra-numerical excellence would allow them to compete on equal terms.

In conclusion, many so-called “historical studies” on the topic suffer from obvious subjectivity and unreliability of data. In contrast, Chatterjee’s study overcomes these usual weaknesses quite successfully. After all, the author apparently shares neither any familial or any direct social relationship with the

Sikh community - a fact which uplifts the possibilities of historical objectivity of her analysis. Moreover, the use of systematic methodology and highly-relevant primary sources further add to the objectivity and academic reliability of the study. The author has very elegantly exercised her expertise of research in the discipline of history and produced a book very valuable for scholars in the field of modern Sikh history, politics, and ethnicity.

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Inderjit Singh Jaijee & Dona Suri, *The Legacy of Militancy in Punjab: Long Road to 'Normalcy'* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2020), 213pp.

This is a beautifully written book, authored by two individuals who lived through the years militancy in Punjab - Dona Suri, a long-time senior journalist, and Inderjit Singh Jaijee, a well-known civil and human rights activist. The authors weave together a fascinating narrative based on personal experiences, first-hand interviews, press reports, government sources, and civil society documentation. A particular strength of this book is that it cradles the unique middle-ground between an academic analysis, participant observation, and political/social commentary. The result is a book that should be of interest to academics for avenues of further research, public intellectuals pondering the causes and lingering effects of the "Punjab crisis", and the general educated public interested in learning about various aspects of the Punjab tragedy through a readily-accessible narrative.

While the precise focus and purpose of the book is not clearly delineated, the authors pose a set of questions in the Preface regarding the legacies of militancy in Punjab which help to contextualize the book's contents. These questions include the following: "What was lost or damaged in the decade of violence?; What changed as a result of the militancy and the state's response?; What was the response of political parties, civil administration, police, and judiciary to the never-before-seen conditions of militancy in Punjab; How did average citizens of Punjab respond to the violence at the time?; What is the new reality of 'normalcy' in Punjab?; and finally, is it better to remember or forget those trying times, and at what cost?" According to my reading, the book's overall thesis is that the legacies of militancy have fundamentally altered the nature of state-society relations, politics, and civil administration in Punjab by normalizing the various "excesses" committed during that period into the post-conflict civil society and body politic of Punjab. Thus, "normalcy" represents a new damaged type of "normalcy" that did not exist before militancy in Punjab.

The book is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 provides the political, economic, and social background to the period before militancy in Punjab. Of particular significance is the authors' observations about the weakness of leftist political parties in the state, the inability of the scheduled-caste Bhaujan Samaj Party to become a formidable political force, the prevalence of "factionalism" in party politics, and dominance of the state's political parties and politics by

only a select number of (often inter-related) political families. While the implications of these dynamics are not clearly specified by the authors, they appear to be arguing that these dynamics provided the “political space” for militancy in the state during the 1980s and 1990s.

Chapter 2 (titled “Due Process: Punjab”) examines how the use of national security legislation, including the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Prevention Act (TADA), was used to crush the rise of Sikh separatism in the aftermath of Operation Bluestar instead of opting for political initiatives. The chapter weaves together numerous empirical case studies and personal narratives to demonstrate how the Punjab Police’s incentive structure (and its norms of operations) was changed as a result of TADA to encourage a proverbial “scorched earth” policy to crush militancy. In the process, this allowed senior police officers to “terrorize” the general population for their own material gain. The Indian judicial system, notorious for its inefficiency and openness to political interference, could do little to provide justice for the victims of state terrorism. According to the authors, the effects of this period and the current form of “normalcy” have institutionalized the violent nature of policing (and their relative legal impunity) in Punjab to the current day - a tragic legacy of the “Punjab crisis”. Chapter 3, similar to the previous chapter, is titled “Due Process: Delhi”. The chapter demonstrates how the anti-Sikh pogroms after Indira Gandhi’s assassination were orchestrated by the Congress-led central government to “teach the Sikhs a lesson,” and how the nearly dozen investigative commissions after the pogroms, failed to provide justice for the victims largely because of the lack of political will on the part of all ruling Indian political parties and ineffective judicial institutions. The authors imply that pogroms continue to be used as an effective means of controlling minority groups, gaining votes, and even advancing the economic interests of certain political leaders.

One of the most interesting chapters of the book is Chapter 4, which begins by showing how the rule of law was abandoned by the state and its security forces in their attempt to quell Sikh militancy. This included the unofficial, but state sanctioned, use of extrajudicial killings, monetary bounties, and the elimination of suspected militant sympathizers. Interestingly, the authors also detail how the police acquired the property of convicted and slain Sikh militants - a pattern that continued after the return of “normalcy” with senior police officers and politicians (in conjunction with property dealers) forcibly taking over the land of citizens of Punjab and also Non-Resident Indians (NRIs). This dynamic, which is meticulously analyzed by the authors, is one little known “legacy” of militancy which continues to the current day.

Chapter 5 of the book examines the cultural impact of militancy, particularly the commercialization of militancy-related attire, songs, movies, and symbols. The authors argue that these cultural artifacts of militancy have especially gained traction in the Sikh diaspora where much of the youth tries to connect with their ancestral homeland and regain a sense of identity by turning to the “radical chic” of Khalistan. In contrast to the success of much of this

merchandise, militancy-related movies, while attracting the attention of Indian censors and security agencies, have not been particularly profitable for their producers in a highly-competitive entertainment market place. Nonetheless, their production demonstrates the continuing legacies of militancy including attempts at community “memorialization” of victimhood, injustice, and grievance. Chapter 6 of the book discusses how the specter of Khalistan appears to be kept alive through the press and the concerns of Indian security agencies, whereas its active political support in Punjab appears to be minimal.

In conclusion, this is a fascinating book, written by two keen and very well-informed observers of Punjab through the past several decades. Its thought-provoking description and analysis is valuable for scholars and the educated lay audience alike. In particular, it argues that the sense of “normalcy” in current-day Punjab is really not “normal” at all, but rather the distorted legacy of militancy. Punjab today faces numerous challenges including a declining economy in comparison to other Indian states, an administrative and policing structure which is corrupt and lacks legitimacy, and populist politicians who value winning the next election more than sustainable economic and human development in the state. As the authors discuss in the Epilogue, these conditions have led to the alienation of the Punjabi (especially rural Sikh) youth, who have begun immigrating to foreign countries both legally and illegally in record numbers. This is perhaps the next big challenge to face Punjab as the “new normal” and a legacy of militancy in the state. The consequences of this “new normal” remain to be seen but, as the authors allude, they are likely to be ominous for Punjab’s future.

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R. S. Ghuman and R. Sharma. 2018. *Emerging Water Insecurity in India: Lessons from an Agriculturally Advanced State*. (Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), pp. xxvi+298.

The Indian state of Punjab has been experiencing an acute economic and agrarian crisis for at least the past three decades. Numerous academic papers, books and government reports have amply highlighted the nature of this crisis: deceleration in economic growth relative to other states, stagnating productivity in agriculture, rising agricultural indebtedness leading to farmer suicides, lack of jobs, environmental and ecological crisis associated with increased toxicity of the soil, degradation in quality of drinking water, continuing fall in the amount of available usable water (as measured in MAFs) and more importantly an accelerating depletion of the state’s water table. Yet there is no panic, no urgency or effective action to do something about it. Except for some sections of civil society, nobody in position of power seems to question or care whether future generation of Punjabis – their own children and grandchildren - will be able to enjoy the same living standard as them, will be capable of sustaining

themselves economically or be able to enjoy long and healthy lives. For them, the hope is, like with the Covid-19 virus, the problem will simply disappear or go away. But all rational people know it will not without mitigation. That is why the book under review by Ghuman and Sharma needs to be read and digested by the wider public, environment-oriented govt. institutions and NGOs and especially policymakers who need to be shaken out of their indifference. The book also has added significance as the primary author, Dr Ranjit Ghuman, is one of the most renowned experts and authority on Punjab economic development, especially rural development and the Green Revolution which he has studied critically right from its beginnings.

This latest addition to the literature on the water crisis and emerging water insecurity is undoubtedly the most comprehensive given its primary focus on changing patterns of water use, the type of challenges they have generated and ways to deal with them. Since majority of the water is used for irrigation in agriculture, this sector, rightly, is given greater space. The book is divided into 10 chapters, with the first two introducing the reader to emerging water scarcity and water insecurity challenges in global and national contexts. The next six chapters provide commentary on the extent and nature of water resources and changing patterns of water use in Punjab. Based on secondary and primary survey data, these chapters provide rich and detailed accounts of changing patterns of water use in agriculture, industry and for meeting household needs. Chapter 8 also provides data on levels of awareness of water scarcity issues among users. The last two chapters deal with water governance and policy issues at both India and Punjab levels with the final chapter devoted to highlighting policy recommendations arising from evidence gathered during this study. The book is a must read for anyone who wants to get to grips with genesis and solutions to Punjab's grave water crisis.

Unsurprisingly, forces unleashed by the Green Revolution in general and water-guzzling impacts of paddy production in particular, are seen as the main villain. The nexus between rice cultivation and investment in tube-well irrigation, fuelled by free electricity, could not be clearer, with their deadly consequences on depletion of the water table. The problem is further compounded by decreasing levels of annual rainfall and drastically reduced supply of canal water. Thus, ever increasing demands on water use confront ever declining supplies, producing a lethal outcome. It is not that Punjab is an efficient producer of rice. Far from it. Each kg. of rice takes 5,337 litres of water to produce in Punjab which is double that required in West Bengal (2605 litres) and much higher than the all-India average of 3875 litres (p. 96), and yet nobody seems to care about its consequences for Punjab.

Apart from the efficiency argument, there is another important dimension to the present predicament. Since Punjabis are traditionally not great rice consumers, given the incentives provided they continue with their intensive cultivation of rice as part of the deeply entrenched wheat-paddy crop rotation pattern. This implies Punjabis export not only rice to the rest of India (and indeed the world), but also export their water. According to Ghuman and Sharma,

increase in rice cultivation between 1980-81 and 2013-14 (leading to 3.6 times increase in water consumption) is correlated with 3.2-fold increase in Punjab's contribution to the central pool of rice. Thus, they argue, "Clearly, most of the rice production of Punjab went to the central pool. Consequently, between 73 and 81 percent of the water consumption in rice production was virtually meant for the central pool. *This is a case of a virtual water export from Punjab to the rest of India*" (emphasis added) (p.97). So in effect, Punjab's rice plays a dual role in India: it feeds the hungry in rice-deficit states and provides them with water by depriving Punjab's own future children.

Despite Punjab's higher status in economic development (as measured in per capita terms) its level of industrialization is still relatively low. The industrial structure is dominated by smaller scale units, with a small percentage of medium sized units. There is a distinct lack of large scale industry. All these industrial units compete for the same subsoil water, with most having their own tubewells. Their water use varies depending on what they are producing but medium and large scale units were found to be the largest users of water, putting further pressure on the water table. Needless to say most of the owners are of the view that their business operations are hampered by lack of sufficient supply of water. The domestic or household sector also competes for the same subsoil water and with increasing population and hence demand in both rural and urban areas, extra burden is placed on supplies. Despite this increase in demand and rising water insecurity, rural as well as urban users are reluctant to pay. The 'populist' politicians are happy to provide free or highly subsidised water so as not to upset their vote banks.

In their concluding chapters the authors rightly point to inertia regarding water policies and provide a comprehensive list of recommendation to aid policy makers. It is an excellent blueprint for action but the onus is on policy makers to act. Whether they will heed the warnings or let the current unsustainable arrangements continue can only be answered over time. In this reviewer's judgement the status quo is likely to prevail and any change that upsets the special agrarian interests and the mutually beneficial relationships nurtured with the Indian state are likely to be resisted. Recently, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) added another damning report on the seriousness of Punjab's groundwater challenge and Punjab state's failures. Like the warnings issued in previous reports, the CAG report also reiterated in alarming terms that unless current practice continues unabated, *the state will be rendered a desert in the next two decades*. When and if this happens, who will explain or justify that to Punjab's children?

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