

Politics in the Developing World

Edited by

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- 9 Discuss how South Africa's handling of the vexed question of national identity has implications for other entrenched conflicts such as those in the Middle East.

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

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- Southall, R. (ed.), *Opposition and Democracy in South Africa* (London: Frank Cass, 2001). A substantial collection on the political parties and party system—past, present, and future prospects.
- Terreblanche, S., *A History of Inequality in South Africa 1652–2002* (Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 2004). Historical examination of the economic exploitation of the indigenous peoples by settler groups. Argues that society in South Africa is more unequal now than ever, with social democracy offering a more appropriate solution than 'neo-liberal democratic capitalism'.

WEB LINKS

- www.nedlac.org.za The National Economic Development and Labour Council—'South Africa's primary institute for social dialogue'.
- www.idasa.org.za The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (Cape Town), an independent, non-profit, public interest organization.
- www.mg.co.za The *Mail and Guardian* online.
- www.gov.za The official website of the South African government.
- www.anc.org.za The website of the African National Congress.
- www.hsrc.org.za The site of the Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria.



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Civil society: active or passive?

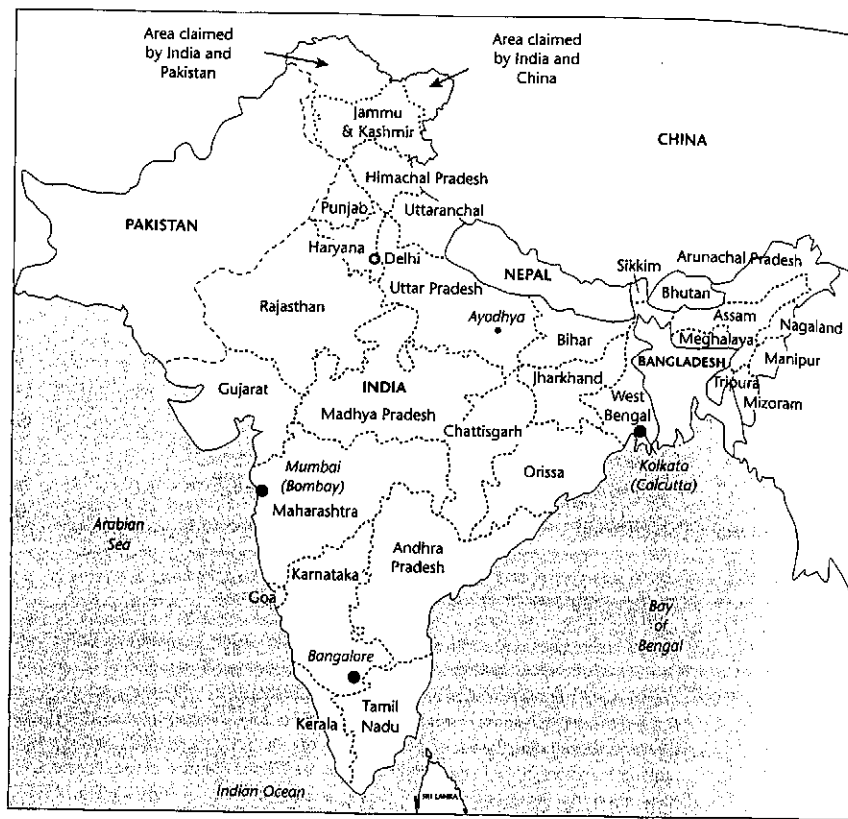
India

Rob Jenkins

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OVERVIEW

This chapter examines civil society in the 'world's largest democracy'. Unlike most developing countries, India has maintained a democratic political system since emerging from colonial rule—a feat often attributed to the vibrancy of its civil society. After outlining some of the salient features of India's recent political history, this chapter examines: (1) controversies surrounding the size and composition of India's civil society; (2) issues relating to regional variations in the nature of associational life; (3) the question of whether states can help to spur the development of civil society; and (4) problems in understanding the contribution of civil society to improved governance, including consideration of civil society's darker side.



INDIA

Introduction

The Indian National Congress, the premier organization in the struggle for independence from British rule, was formed in 1885 by a group of English-educated lawyers and professionals. It was not until the 1920s, under the leadership of Mohandas K. Gandhi, that 'Congress' became a mass movement capable of pressing the colonial authorities for greater

self-rule. This was also the period when, largely through Congress-related efforts, India's civil society began to flourish. The process was aided by the mobilizing efforts associated with the pre-independence elections to legislative councils. India's constitution of 1950 outlined the functions of its political institutions, including the division of powers between the

Box 17a.1 Key dates in the history of independent India

1947	'Partition' of colonial India creates two independent states, India and Pakistan; more than a million people killed in accompanying Hindu-Muslim riots; Jawaharlal Nehru (of the Indian National Congress) becomes first Prime Minister	1984	Mrs Gandhi assassinated by Sikh bodyguards; her son, Rajiv, becomes Prime Minister
1950	Constitution ratified, confirming India as federal, democratic, secular, and committed to social justice	1991	Rajiv Gandhi assassinated by Sri Lankan Tamil separatists; new Congress government of P.V. Narasimha Rao initiates economic liberalization programme
1967	Fourth General Election: under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi Congress loses power in several states	1992	Destruction of Babri Mosque by Hindu nationalist militants
1975-9	Mrs Gandhi's national 'Emergency' (1975-7); widespread protest action leads to electoral defeat for Mrs Gandhi (1977) and India's first non-Congress central government (1977-9)	1998	BJP assumes national power (in coalition); following year, BJP receives fresh electoral mandate (also in coalition)
		2002-3	After a train carrying Hindus is burnt, thousands of Muslims are killed in Gujarat, with suspected state complicity
		2004	Voters replace BJP-led coalition government with coalition headed by Congress

central and provincial tiers of its federal system. The constitution contained the usual liberal protections that make civil society possible (freedom of speech, of assembly, and so forth). But India's civil society was also shaped by other legal provisions, such as the 'reservation' of roughly one-fifth of parliamentary constituencies for members of the so-called Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Within the Hindu caste system, a complex and ancient though evolving system of social stratification in which people's caste status is determined at birth, Scheduled Castes (now often referred to as Dalits) were marginalized and regarded as almost subhuman 'untouchables'. The mainly forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes were similarly regarded as beyond the pale of civilized life.

Congress dominated the first twenty years of post-independence politics. Its stranglehold over state-level (i.e. provincial) power was broken only at the 1967 general elections. Another decade elapsed before Congress first lost power at the national level in the 1977 general elections. By the late 1980s, not only was unchallenged Congress dominance a thing of the past; so was control over electoral politics by the richer, more powerful and better-educated groups in the Hindu social order—the so-called upper castes. Increasingly, parties appealed to members of the

lower castes, particularly those just above the Scheduled Castes in the hierarchy, often recruiting a greater number of candidates from these communities. Parties constructed around lower-caste identity also emerged. From the late 1980s, regional parties—those confined mainly to a single state—began increasing their share of the vote.

To these trends, the 1990s added two others of great significance. The first was the ascendancy of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP's primary pledges were to tear down the Babri Mosque in the north Indian town of Ayodhya (accomplished by BJP-affiliated militants in 1992), and to abolish legal provisions that permitted religious minorities to follow different sets of social practices concerning marriage, divorce, and other matters. The BJP began the 1990s as a pariah party with which almost no other mainstream grouping would ally; by 1998 it was leading the national coalition government. The BJP was aided by the 'regionalization' of party politics, through which single-state parties emerged as significant electoral players. In several states, regional parties proved more than willing to ally with the BJP in order to defeat their long-time local rival—the Congress. The BJP—which polling data have consistently shown as more popular among

richer and higher-caste voters—also benefited from a backlash against the political assertiveness of traditionally subordinated groups among the lower castes.

The second key trend of the 1990s was the shift from a state-dominated economic policy framework to one giving greater scope to market signals. The programme of economic liberalization undertaken by a Congress government in 1991, but continued by successive governments from the left and the right, has unfolded much more gradually than similar reforms in other developing countries. But while much controversy remains concerning the impact of India's reforms, particularly on the poor, by the twenty-first century India's role in the world economy (and in international economic diplomacy) had clearly increased.

Size and composition of India's civil society

Whatever its shortcomings, India's democratic system is known, even to those without detailed knowledge of the country, as a site of lively political contestation, with all manner of civic groups endlessly aligning and realigning with one another on every conceivable issue—from how to reform affirmative action provisions in government employment, to the appropriate nuclear doctrine for a country in India's geostrategic position. Even during periods when India's democratic institutions were undergoing decay, observers (within and outside India) have always had great faith in the ability of India's vast and varied civil society to take up some of the slack (Kothari 1984).

It will therefore surprise many people to learn that considerable controversy has recently surfaced over whether India's civil society is so impressively diverse and prolific after all. In *Democracy Without Associations*, Chhibber (1999) turned conventional wisdom on its head, arguing that India's civil society was characterized by relatively small size and thin substance. The dearth of civic associations, Chhibber maintained, caused India's political parties to mobilize people on the basis of caste, sect, ethnicity, or linguistic group. In a vicious circle, the politicization of these 'ascriptive identities'—groupings to which people belong by birth, rather than by

Key points

- India's civil society first emerged with nationalist and electoral mobilization by Congress.
- Congress dominance was increasingly challenged from the late 1960s.
- The BJP's rise during the 1990s coincided with the regionalization of party politics.
- Since 1991 there has been significant economic liberalization.

choice—further shrank the space available for non-partisan civil society.

The role of ascriptive identity

The claim that India's associational life was weak drew intense criticism. Particularly targeted was Chhibber's apparent insistence that 'informal' associations—those in which there are no office-bearers or codified rules—did not qualify for inclusion within a narrow definition of civil society. There is a long-standing argument over whether ethnicity-based organizations—such as caste associations, religious brotherhoods, and groups that seek to politicize linguistic identity—should be considered part of Indian civil society. But Chhibber's critics felt he had gone too far in the restrictive direction. One otherwise positive reviewer asked: 'is focusing on formal associations a reasonable indicator of the presence of solidarities between the family and the state' (Sethi 1999: 94)? In another review, the co-author of a key 1960s text that challenged the assumption that organizations had to be either modern or traditional (Rudolph and Rudolph 1967), argued that Chhibber was defining civil society too narrowly: 'Caste associations are anomalous; they are intentional associations, hybrids

that combine voluntary with ascriptive characteristics' (Rudolph 2003).

These associations exemplify 'the modernity of tradition': in order to advance the interests of traditional caste groups, they sought access to modern means of social mobility and political influence. Caste associations, such as those representing various segments of the Jat community in north India, have done this by establishing scholarship programmes and student hostels, promoting internal reforms of the community's social practices (particularly around gender relations) and demanding representation in government service. Jat and other caste associations sometimes endorse candidates or parties at election time. But even when they do not, they are engaged in modern politics. In fact, contesting elections can alter the structure and meaning of caste itself—modernizing it, one could say. For instance, the geographical and social boundaries of a caste often broaden considerably as associations seek to increase their numbers, the currency of electoral democracy. Divisions among the various sections of what came to be known as the Maratha 'caste cluster' in western India are papered over in the name of constructing a more encompassing political identity for the group (Lele 1990).

Rudolph's main point, however, concerned the broader characterization of India's civil society: '[i]f caste associations, demand groups, issue and movement politics, and nongovernment organisations are taken into account, India could be "read" as having a pervasive and extraordinarily active associational life, perhaps one of the most participatory in the world' (Rudolph 2003). Even if Chhibber's critics are largely right on the question of civil society's vibrancy—their case looks extremely strong on certain methodological points—Chhibber has still provided a valuable service by directing attention towards places where civil society's size or importance has been overstated, or where it is looking frayed around the edges. For foreigners who come into contact with elements of India's civil society it sometimes seems bigger than it actually is; there is a tendency to be impressed by the absolute numbers of associations involved, and the amount of noise they generate in English-language media, and to forget how unimpressive these numbers are given India's huge population. This is true of the trade union sector, for instance. Organized labour only exists in the outermost layer of Indian economic

activity. Three per cent is a common figure cited as the proportion of the population that belongs to a union. And yet, even here caution is warranted. Many labour organizations are unregistered, and though this means they are less capable of obtaining full legal recognition, it also means that there may be more associational activity taking place in various hidden parts of India's vast hinterland than the statistics indicate.

As for civil society's frayed edges, Varshney (2004), among others, observes that, whatever its merits, India's civil society may be living on borrowed time. Many associations exist in theory, but are shells of their former selves, lacking organizational substance. In some regions, the better part of local civil society consists of associations founded during the movement for independence. This is an institutional inheritance from an earlier era of organization-building. It consists of many functional organizations affiliated with the Congress movement—women's leagues, student federations, and so forth, not to mention cooperatives of various sorts, many of which are so highly compromised by government interference that they appear, in fact, to constitute good examples of the weak civil society perceived by Chhibber.

Regional variations in civil society

In addition, both the strength and effectiveness of civil society vary from state to state. The southern state of Kerala, for instance, is a land of civic bounty; there one can find reading clubs, cinema clubs, drama clubs, alongside the more familiar actors such as trade unions (Kerala's strong Marxist political tradition has ensured this), business associations, and so forth. In the eastern state of Orissa, on the other hand, civil society is extremely weak, and in some areas non-existent.

The memberships (and conceptual horizons) of most associations do not, generally, extend beyond state borders. Katzenstein et al. (2001: 245) argue that 'issue-based Indian social movements have remained substantially limited to the regions within which they operate... even when the issues and interests they represent are national in their relevance'. There are good reasons for even functional associations (let alone 'movement' groups) to confine their work

within the boundaries of their 'home' state. First, the sheer size of most states—in population terms alone—is usually sufficient to occupy the efforts of civic groups that deal intensively with public authorities. Second, in India's federal system states form a powerful tier of government. State governments make many important policy decisions, particularly in the era of economic liberalization. Third, most Indian parties are geared to the state level: they would prefer control over a state government to even the most senior cabinet positions in New Delhi, short of the prime ministership. Fourth, since India's federal system is organized along linguistic lines, there are natural barriers to the spread of many associational forms. Kerala's literature societies, for instance, find it hard to break out of their provincial boundaries. Associated cultural differences between states (not least the existence of distinct regional caste systems) further reinforce the federally segmented nature of associational life. Despite all these constraints, civil society's largely state-specific nature is undergoing profound change: the proliferation of national and international media (including the internet) has brought 'national organizing' within the grasp of an increasing number of associations.

The difficulty of pinning down the implications of these trends for the development of civil society is exemplified by the ambiguous impact of the so-called 'regionalization' of Indian politics alluded to earlier. Because political contestation is increasingly between single-state parties, one might expect a corresponding regionalization of civil society. There is some evidence of this: state-level units of national trade union federations are increasingly going their own way—or at least acting more autonomously (*vis-à-vis* their national leaderships) than in the past. However, over

State fostering of civil society

While state-wise variations in the texture of civil society clearly exist, the reasons for these differences are much debated. For instance, while some attribute Kerala's diversified civil society to its high literacy rate, the nature of the Kerala state's interaction with

the past decade, these same regional parties have joined with national parties of the left and the right to form coalition governments in New Delhi. This has made regional parties key actors on the national political stage. Again, it would not be surprising to find civil society mirroring this crucial political trend, with national-level ministers from, say, Andhra Pradesh's Telugu Desam Party providing a much needed point of access to central government agencies for Andhra Pradesh-based civic groups. There is some anecdotal evidence to support this claim, but it requires systematic empirical study. If true, such a trend would represent a major shift from past practice. The state-wise organization of India's civil society has often impeded the emergence of effective national lobbies on controversial policy matters—notably agriculture. In the 1980s, an alliance was formed among farmers' organizations from Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh; it collapsed when each group became focused on events in its respective home state.

Key points

- The reputed vibrancy of India's civil society has recently been questioned.
- One issue is whether associations based on ascriptive identity should count as part of civil society.
- Many of the civil society organizations formed during the independence movement are moribund.
- India's federal system means that the nature and effectiveness of civil society varies between states, which also tends to impede activism across state boundaries.

civil society can also be seen to breed further civic associationalism. The People's Plan Campaign (PPC), a radical programme of democratic decentralization, was established by the state's Left Democratic Front coalition in the mid-1990s. The newly introduced

system of political representation (and development planning) did not just create more state bureaucracy; it also catalysed a huge flowering of civil society. Whether entities such as 'user committees', 'women's groups', and 'neighbourhood groups'—voluntary associations that under the People's Plan *had* to be formed in order to obtain certain state benefits—qualify as bona fide manifestations of civil society is almost as long-standing a debate as the question of how to classify ethnic associations. Clearly, many such associations do spring up merely to obtain a specific benefit, and have no substantive influence over state functioning. Indeed, many get 'captured' by syndicates of 'contractors', the politically connected people—sometimes politicians themselves—who obtain contracts for development works. But there are indications that at least some of Kerala's 'state-fostered' associations have gone on to seek improvements in systems and procedures of governance (Isaac 2000).

Readers might be surprised that it is considered legitimate in India for state policy to be explicitly geared towards creating civil society groups; the two sides of the state-civic divide are usually conceived of as autonomous and separate. But two factors—one

Civil society and the promotion of better governance

Despite these hopes, the Indian case demonstrates that the role of civil society in promoting better governance is ambiguous at best. This can be illustrated with examples of civil society groups that have sought to combat corruption and tried to prevent communal violence.

Chandhoke (2003: 184) argues that 'legal and bureaucratic languages... even as they penetrate civil society, are embedded in the power of the state'. The language, and indeed practice, of legal-bureaucratic rationality has become a much more prominent focal point for the actions of certain civil-society actors in India. It has long been the operating idiom of the professionalized sector of civil society—for instance non-governmental organizations (NGOs),

related to India, the other more general—make this less unusual. First, as we have seen, India's nationalist movement was a hothouse of association-forming activism. This introduced into India's liberal political culture the idea that civil society need not spring up organically. The 'fostering' of civil society, whether by parties or the state (and the Congress, as a bridging institution, straddled the two), became an accepted route through which new associational forms could emerge. The second relevant factor is the influence of aid agencies, which as a result of their work in developing countries where the public sphere is less fertile than in India, are accustomed to funding programmes that, by design, try to create civil society organizations that could improve accountability (Jenkins 2001).

Key points

- One reason for variation between states is the role of state governments in fostering civil society.
- Opinions differ on whether state-fostered associations should qualify for inclusion within civil society.

the policy advocates working in obscure areas of technical competence—but only during the past decade has the 'mass movement' sector of civil society fully embraced the language and practices of legal-bureaucratic rationality.

The rise of public-interest litigation in India has arguably triggered an interest by social movements in adopting, almost mimicking, legal processes. This has taken the form of procedurally complex public hearings—of which the approach taken by Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), detailed below, is but one version. People's hearings are held where voluntary groups feel compelled to substitute for authorities that fail to provide information or consult with citizens, especially on controversial infrastructure

projects deemed likely to have damaging environmental impacts, such as the Enron power project in Maharashtra. The logistics of collecting evidence, both for one-off civil society-led hearings as well as for the researching of *faux*-official 'status reports' on incidents of police violence, are formidable and represent a 'legalization' of social action. Instead of demanding an inquiry, these civic groups conduct inquiries themselves, and if sufficiently successful in conveying their evidence to a larger constituency, can be in a strong position to demand inclusion in state investigations.

Civil society activism geared towards combating corruption tends to produce organizational hybrids—not in the sense of sharing modern and traditional characteristics, but in so far as they expand beyond their conventional roles. Rather than merely mobilizing voters *during* elections, and pressing governments to live up to their campaign promises *between* elections—that is, providing vertical accountability—many civic associations have insinuated themselves into *horizontal* channels of accountability, which traditionally involve state agencies (auditors, ombudsmen, judiciaries) monitoring other branches of the state (executive ministries, parastatal organizations). By combining their conventional role within vertical channels of accountability with participation in horizontal channels of accountability (from which non-governmental actors were once completely excluded), some civic associations have undergone a process of hybridization (Goetz and Jenkins 2004).

Based in the state of Rajasthan, the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), or Workers' and Farmers' Power Organization, embodies this trend. The MKSS immediately presents the question of categorization. Is it a movement, as its leaders claim? Ironically, this claim is both bolstered and undermined by the MKSS's participation in the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM)—a 'movement' group, as its name suggests, but also an increasingly organized force in mainstream, institutionalized Indian politics. Is the MKSS a union? The 'Worker' part refers to day-labourers on employment-creation schemes, so it qualifies in one sense, but does not engage in the kind of collective bargaining conventionally recognized as trade unionism. Is it a party? Not really, but it has run, sometimes successfully, a few candidates in village elections.

Regardless of how it is classified, the MKSS's great innovation has been to use financial information from government documents as the catalyst for a participatory auditing exercise. This involves ordinary villagers cross-checking information from official files against what has actually been constructed by public works programmes on the ground. Part of the process is questioning workers on employment schemes to see how much they were actually paid, a sum that is almost always less than what financial records showed officials to have claimed on their behalf from the state exchequer. By exposing these discrepancies, in public, and based on people's own energies and testimonies, some corrupt officials and local notables have been forced to apologize and return stolen funds—major if isolated victories. A minor deterrent effect has been felt in some localities close to where the MKSS is active (Jenkins and Goetz 1999).

But the odds against long-term impact are huge. This may be partly why the MKSS has branched out into at least two other areas of work. First, it has sought to make use of new rules requiring candidates to declare their financial assets and whether they have criminal records. During state-level elections in 2003, the MKSS and other civic groups publicized this information in a form accessible to voters (Khera 2004). Second, the MKSS has participated in public-interest litigation against government agencies that have failed to use public grain stocks to alleviate famine in various parts of India. This has involved monitoring activities in coordination with commissioners appointed by the Supreme Court to obtain evidence of government compliance and non-compliance. Such state-civil society partnerships are often criticized for neutralizing civil society. But in this case there appears to be a genuine difference in the *quality* of the partnership: the litigants, MKSS among them, are engaged as active demanders of accountability, driving the advancement of rights, rather than as subcontractors delivering public services.

The role of civil society in communal relations is another area where the lines between traditional and modern, and between state and civil society, are blurred. It is also an area in which we are reminded of the distinction between civil and uncivil forms of associationalism. On the one hand, civil society organizations and the state seem—in some instances—excessively intertwined. In 2002-3, the

state of Gujarat suffered India's worst communal rioting since partition. Thousands of Muslims lost their lives, and tens of thousands lost their homes. A pivotal player in these events was the 'voluntary sector' organization, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or National Volunteers' Association, which is the ideological core of the Hindu nationalist movement, the then ruling BJP being its political expression. The RSS's presence within organs of the state administration—among elite civil servants, the police, paramilitary units—was a crucial influence on the grisly outcome.

On the other hand, one of the few mechanisms that appear to have been effective at combating communal violence is something very similar, in terms of breaching the state-civil society divide. Varshney (2004: 206) has argued that under certain circumstances, in order to prevent communal violence, 'Civil society organizations, for all practical purposes, become the ears and arms of the state'. While this may sound sinister, Varshney is in fact referring to a positive version of state-civil society partnership with a proven ability to tackle small, localized communal flare-ups before they erupt into widespread violence.

Varshney's study of civil society and communal violence in Kerala and Uttar Pradesh (UP) addresses the question of why UP suffered so much Hindu-Muslim violence, compared to Kerala, which during the early part of the twentieth century had been a communal tinderbox. The conventional wisdom has

interpreted the statistical correlation between state-wide levels of illiteracy and the propensity towards communal rioting as implying a causal relationship. Fewer illiterates in Kerala, in other words, means fewer chances to manipulate communal passions. Varshney suggests that states are the *wrong unit of analysis* for this particular problem. Communal violence is a local (primarily urban) phenomenon, and when data on development and communal violence are aggregated at the city or town level (instead of at the state level), the correlation between social high literacy and communal peace disappears. What *does* correlate, inversely, with lower levels of communal violence is the degree of local civil society organizing that spans the Hindu-Muslim divide—that is, the existence of *inter-communal* associations that can act as an unofficial institution for defusing disputes and preventing escalation into full-scale rioting.

Key points

- Evidence that civil society organizations improve governance is ambiguous.
- The MKSS's efforts to combat corruption provides a good illustration.
- Some civil society organizations foment communal violence but other cross-communal organizations may contain it.

Conclusion

The complex nature of India's associational life has spurred debates about its size and composition, its regional variations, its relations with the state, and its capacity to improve governance. The difficulty of resolving these issues demonstrates both the protean nature of India's civil society in particular, and the ambiguity of concepts used to analyse civil society more generally. Indian civil society challenges conventional analytical categories separating modern and traditional identities, civil and uncivil expressions of the associational impulse, and vertical and

horizontal forms of accountability. India's civil society tends to revise and reconstitute itself with remarkable frequency. Though the exact nature of the impact is unclear, it is hard to deny that this process is being affected by **globalization**. Many Indian civic organizations have received a boost from their connections abroad—largely through transnational social networks connecting members of the Indian diaspora. In some cases, such linkages illustrate other trends discussed in this chapter. For instance, the reportedly large role played by overseas

Indians in fund-raising for the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (or World Hindu Council), another RSS-linked group, suggests not only that India has not bucked the worldwide trend towards mobilizing so-called traditional identities through modern means, but also that its civic associations are unafraid of deploying *uncivil* methods to obtain their objectives.

QUESTIONS

- 1 What can India's civil society teach us about the relationship between 'traditional' and 'modern' forms of politics?
- 2 What measures could be used to assess the *health* of India's civil society?
- 3 Do all federal systems give rise to state-wise variations in the texture of civil society to the degree found in India?
- 4 Under what conditions might state-civil society partnership be likely to result in improved governance, and under what conditions might it make matters worse?
- 5 What might be some of the constraints on civil society's capacity to curb corruption?

GUIDE TO FURTHER READING

Chandhoke, N., *The Concepts of Civil Society* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003). Uses the case of India to advance theoretically informed arguments about the way in which the idea of civil society has been deployed in much contemporary scholarship.

Jaffrelot, C., *India's Silent Revolution: The Rise of the Lower Castes in North India* (London: Hurst and Co., 2003). Sensitively analyses the emergence of socially marginalized groups into the mainstream of party politics, a process both reflecting and profoundly influencing the nature and development of India's civil society.

Jeffrey, R., *India's Newspaper Revolution: Capitalism, Politics and the Indian-Language Press, 1977-99* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000). Charts, in fascinating detail, both encouraging and disturbing trends in the development of one of the key elements of any functioning civil society—the press.

Mahajan, G., 'Civil Society and Its Avatars: What Happened to Freedom and Democracy', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 15-21 May 1999 (available at www.epw.org.in). Excellent account of the relationship between thinking about civil society in the West and in India.

Sainath, P., *Everybody Loves a Good Drought: Stories from India's Poorest Districts* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1996). An excellent collection of reportage on the plight of India's most vulnerable citizens, showing both their need for strong associations to represent their interests and how sometimes oppressive forms of civil society contribute to the problem.

Varshney, A., *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims in India* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002). Combines statistical sophistication and conceptual rigour to examine the role of *some* forms of civil society in defusing communal conflict.

WEB LINKS

www.pucl.org The site of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, an Indian civil society organization that campaigns for human rights.

<http://sarn.ssrc.org> The site of the South Asia Research Network set up by the South Asia programme of the independent, International Social Science Research Council based in Washington, DC, United States.

www.indiastat.com An extensive site of social, economic, and political data on India.

<http://parliamentofindia.nic.in> The site of India's parliament.

www.hinduonline.com The on-line version of *The Hindu*, a leading English-Language daily newspaper.



COMPANION WEB SITE

For additional material and resources, see the companion web site at: www.oup.com/uk/booksites/politics/