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Quite self-consciously, this book stands at the intersection of Indian politics and what has come to be called "global political thought." The latter subfield represents an intellectual rebellion against the West-centric character of political theory. In the older days, this subfield used to be called the history of ideas. But for the newer scholars, even some famous historians of ideas do not rise to the level of adequacy.

Consider Isaiah Berlin, among the more capacious political theorists of the post-1945 era. When Berlin moved beyond standard political theory, he basically discussed the "West's Other," such as Germany's anti-Enlightenment thinkers, Vico and Herder (*Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, 1976), or Russian thinkers such as Turgenev and Tolstoy (*Russian Thinkers*, 2008). He never touched theorists of what we call the Global South today, as if they had nothing important to say about politics and history.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Michel Foucault transformed scholarly consciousness on these matters (especially *Power/Knowledge*, 1980). He argued that in modern times, only those ideas acquired dominance that were patronized by the institutions of power. After the British capture of India, India's history in the nineteenth century was produced by James Mill in London, and in the twentieth century, by a score of historians at the University of Cambridge. Knowledge at the margins of power structures never, or barely, stood a chance of being widely read.

In what has become a characteristic mode of global political analysis, Sabastian poses a big political question which is often asked these days, but generally only rhetorically answered, never systematically dissected. Is India's Hindu nationalism, or *Hindutva*, under Narendra Modi a form of fascism? The significance of this question is self-evident. India is now the largest country in the world, even bigger than China. Prime Minister Modi has been ruling India since 2014.

Supported by meticulous research of the relevant texts, especially in Germany and India, and buttressed by her interpretation of pivotal political moments in modern India, Sabastian has produced an impressive piece of scholarship. Sabastian has no doubt that Hindu nationalism is a fascist ideology. Her argument moves in several steps, two of which are critical.

First, she "jettisons diffusionist models that view fascism as originating solely in Europe and inspiring only derivative forms elsewhere" (p. 202). She readily admits that since its birth in the 1920s, roughly at the same time as in Germany and Italy, Hindu nationalism was never "identical to European fascism, (but) it was India's fascism" (p. 2). She defines fascism as the "fusion of the revolutionary with the national" (p. 3). In the process, it organically fuses individual interests with the larger societal interest and embraces violence, if necessary, to achieve the fusion. It can take various forms.

I find this idea—forms of fascism as opposed to one pure prototype—highly persuasive. Even Italy and Germany during the two World Wars do not evince full ideological similarity. As is well-known, state policy under Mussolini did not turn antisemitic until 1938, roughly a decade and a half after his rise to power.

The same idea of multiplicity of forms, but not fundamental substantive differences, applies to democracy or representation systems as well. Parliamentary and presidential democracies are both democratic, but they function differently. First-past-the-post and proportional representation are two principal forms of organizing democratic voting, but while being democratic in essence, their consequences for politics and policy can diverge.

Next, Sabastian moves to the second core of her explanation. She shows how in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s, some important Indian scholars like Benoy Sarkar, influential political leaders like Subhas Chandra Bose, and significant political activists such as Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, the founder of Hindutva, and M.S. Golwalkar, who led the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, the mother organization of Hindu nationalism, were hugely drawn to fascism and, other than Bose, all were opposed to the Muslim minority. On the whole, all favored authoritarianism, violent nationalism, a fusion of the individual with the societal, and a clear identification of the enemy within. She also systematically examines how the leading figures of Nazi Germany thought about the same questions, sometimes pondering whether Indian social concepts such as caste applied to Germany. "Hitler publicly employed the term *Kaste* about two dozen times" (p. 98). She also analyses how Hindu nationalism changed its form after India's independence, especially concentrating on Deen Dayal Upadhyay, widely regarded by modern-day Hindu nationalists as a key ideological figure.

It is a truism that even excellent books have inadequacies. This one is no exception. In the interest of space, let me turn to two criticisms, one empirical, another conceptual.

As a comparative politics scholar, I know that political theory and the field of comparative politics work differently. To return to Isaiah Berlin, political theory does not follow two of the standard modes of knowledge production: the *formal* (mathematics, physics, and logic) and the empirical (history, political science, and sociology). To use his examples (Isaiah Berlin, "Does Political Theory Still Exist?" in *Concepts and Categories*, 1981):

> if I am asked how the Soviet system of criminal laws functions or why Mr. Kennedy was elected President of the United States, I

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> may not be able to answer the question, but I know within what region the relevant evidence must lie, and how an expert would use such evidence to obtain the answer…. But besides these two major categories, there arise questions—(such as) what is justice—when neither induction nor deduction seems to be of help (pp. 145–6).

Berlin goes on to say that political theory belongs to such a realm. While the path of induction was not available to theorists, Berlin did not disfavor the idea of empirical accuracy. In this respect, Sabastian's book does not consistently match the precision of its analytical edge.

Is it true that India "was only the second colony to gain independence from the British after the United States of America some 170 years earlier" (p. 1)—what about Ireland in 1921 (or 1937, depending on one's definition of independence)? Is it true that the Japanese and the Chinese were Indian "coreligionists" (p. 138)—will not that require showing not only that Japan and China received Buddhism from India, but also that they were majority Buddhist, not Tao or Confucian? Ideology, of course, thrives on empirical misidentification. Should scholars of ideologies, too, do the same?

Second, conceptually, the book pays very little attention to Carl Schmitt, a leading German philosopher who joined the Nazi Party. Schmitt drew a distinction between democracy, which he equated with popular will, and liberalism, which for him meant citizen rights and minority rights. He preferred the former and formulated his support for Hitler on that basis. The latter might protect the Jews, but it undermined national strength for him.

This question is extremely relevant to India today, as well as to the populist right generally. Invoking their election victories, Hindu nationalists repeatedly say that they represent popular will, whereas a commitment to minority rights, enshrined in India's Constitution, only weakens the nation. By perfunctorily hinting at this question (p. 201), but not analyzing it, Sabastain loses the theoretical leverage provided by a great distinction of our times—namely, democracy as popular will and democracy as a regime of citizen and minority rights.

That said, given the significance of what it tackles and how textual scholarship is deployed, this book should be very widely read and hopefully will be—both by the scholars of fascism and the scholars of Indian/South Asian politics.

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