

rich empirical base and a concise introduction to related policies. Seongho Sheen adds data and insights on “Demographic Challenges to South Korea’s Security,” supported by a large number of graphs. Given the title of his chapter, I found the repeated excursions into the military and international relations field confusing, but in general, this is a chapter rich in information on an important issue.

The book is concluded by Thomas Fingar’s view on “Global Trends 2025: Implications for South Korea and the ROK-U.S. Alliance.”

The book has an index, but is lacking a joint bibliography. References are provided at the end of each chapter. This is a matter of taste and not uncommon in edited volumes, but does not make the book more user-friendly.

The strength of this interdisciplinary volume is in the various angles from which it explores a topic that is often only covered on the sideline of security analyses: South Korea’s national interest. There is also a slight focus on military aspects, although it is not consistent.

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AN INDIAN POLITICAL LIFE: Charan Singh and Congress Politics, 1937-1961. *The Politics of Northern India, 1937 to 1987; v.1.* By Paul R. Brass. New Delhi and Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2011. xxx, 575 pp. (Tables, figures, maps.) US\$49.95, cloth. ISBN 978-81-321-0686-9.

Charan Singh (1902-1987), who was very briefly prime minister of India and twice chief minister of Uttar Pradesh (India’s largest and most populous state), is somewhat forgotten and seldom discussed, at least in academic circles today. Paul Brass redresses this gap in what is proposed to be a multi-volume study on Singh. One of the reasons why Brass embarked on this ambitious project was full access to Singh’s files, which were given to Brass by Singh himself. However, Brass does not intend his project to be a straight biography but one that “attempts to straddle the conventional division between an individual biography and the history of an epoch” (xiii) and in the process present “a broader history of northern Indian politics over the past 70 years” (xxi).

Brass mentions four aspects of Singh’s political career that are especially important for the purposes of his overall study: in his long career Singh was involved in all levels of the Indian political system; he was seen as the main spokesman for middle peasantry; he was identified with the backward castes; and he had a political vision for India’s development which was very different from Jawaharlal Nehru’s. A cursory look at Singh’s bio validates these points. Singh was first elected to the United Provinces Legislative Assembly from Meerut in 1937 and again in 1946, establishing himself as a leader of the middle cultivators and particularly the Jats, a peasant caste. From the 1930s

Singh was agitating and writing on agricultural and land reform, playing a key role in the passage of the Zamindari Abolition Bill in UP. Following Indian independence he held important portfolios, including home, finance and agriculture, in the Uttar Pradesh (UP) government. In 1967 he defected from the Congress to form his own party, the Bharatiya Kranti Dal, and became the first non-Congress chief minister of UP. In 1977 he was elected to Parliament and became home minister, deputy prime minister and finance minister and eventually prime minister for six months in 1979-1980.

In the volume under review, which covers the period from 1937 to 1961, Brass looks at, among other things, three critical issues which dominated Charan Singh's life and work: the town versus village; law and order, corruption and criminality; and caste and factionalism within the UP Congress and selection of election candidates. This the author does by examining in detail Singh's papers as well as using interviews conducted over years of fieldwork in UP beginning in the early 1960s. For Singh's thoughts on the agricultural economy, Brass uses mostly Singh's published writings and his correspondence as well as government documents, such as the Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee. Brass devotes a separate chapter to Singh's opposition to the acquisition of land from villagers to build residential apartments, focusing on Ghaziabad (in western UP) where Brass in the 1960s had noted the possibility of the "tahsil" becoming an industrial complex one day. When he returns to Ghaziabad, now a district, in 2009 his prediction has come true. On corruption and the "permit-license-quota-raj," which was the prevalent feature of the Indian economy during Singh's lifetime, Brass uses Singh's voluminous correspondence and government memos to make the important point that "corruption, and even criminality, were endemic to the system even before Independence" (158). On Singh himself, Brass says he "was feared because he was not playing the game, because he was serious about preserving his own reputation and about pursuing relentlessly... those he considered corrupt" (208). As Brass puts it later, "anti-corruption was Charan Singh's principal calling card" (512). On the place of caste equations in the UP Congress, one of the more interesting episodes is the recurrent tension in relations between Singh and Nehru, with the latter disapproving of the "Jatpan" (Jatism) that Singh employed in his handling of Congress affairs in Meerut district. However, what was possibly Singh's biggest contribution in this sphere was his challenge to the domination of high castes in north Indian politics and creation of the Backward Classes movement.

The picture that Brass draws of Singh is of a "man of principle and pride, a dedicated nationalist, who at once loved his country while condemning the path chosen for by its leaders and the majority of practicing politicians" (509). In any biographical project it is important to locate the relation between the biographer and the subject. Brass makes no secret of his admiration for Singh's principled politics, even admitting that he "felt a certain kinship of

character” (xxi) with Singh. However, this doesn't stop Brass from criticizing Singh when his “political attitudes and policies were misguided” (xxii). This is especially so with Singh's repeated threats to resign from the UP government through the 1950s but refusal to carry it out until April 1959. Brass notes that Singh's “reputation was tarnished by his apparent profession of willingness to give up power for principle, when in fact he always held on to power and was ever ready to snatch at it when the opportunity arose” (498).

Brass's book is a detailed, sometimes excessively so, reading of the life and times of Charan Singh over roughly three decades. It is an important work for anyone trying to understand the dynamics and complexities of politics in north India during that period.

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SEX TRAFFICKING IN SOUTH ASIA: Telling Maya's Story. *Routledge Research on Gender in Asia Series; 3.* By Mary Crawford. London and New York: Routledge, 2011. ix, 194 pp. (Figures.) US\$42.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-415-50007-4.

Nobody chooses to be born poor, nobody chooses to be born low-caste and certainly nobody chooses to be born a girl in South Asia. Mary Crawford's extensive research forces us to acknowledge that prostitution is the absence of choice. She exposes, through detailed study, how traffickers take advantage of the low value placed on girls in the caste-ridden Brahminical society of Nepal.

Her relentless detailing of sex trafficking from and within Nepal through repeated case studies demonstrates how the intersection of class, caste and gender create vulnerabilities in young Nepali girls to the sex industry. She does a great service to womankind by starting her book, *Sex Trafficking In South Asia—Telling Maya's Story*, with narratives of women and girls from Israel, Cambodia, Bangladesh and Thailand, before talking about a Nepali girl. This sensitively contextualizes the experience of a prostituted girl as universal.

Unfortunately, what is thoughtful in the first chapter becomes repetitive in the subsequent chapters. The title simply tantalizes the reader with the promise of Maya's story but never really narrates it in detail. We never encounter Maya as an individual: who she is, where she comes from, her likes, dislikes, vulnerabilities, dreams and what happened to her beyond life in a shelter. Maya is lost in a sea of representative stories and innumerable citations.

Crawford's narrative would have had a greater impact if she had not placed citations and references in the middle of the main text right through the book. These are extremely distracting and interrupt the reader's connection with the argument.

The reader has to labour through a confusing analysis of a contested definition of trafficking without really understanding who is contesting what.