

Book Review

Hasan, Z. (2009-19). *Ideology and Organization in Indian Politics: Polarization and the Growing Crisis of the Congress Party*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2022, 224pp. Rs. 1495.

Indian Politics has witnessed transformational changes for the past few decades including a political shift of upper and middle castes to the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and of lower-caste elites to regional parties; blunting of identity politics based on caste; expansion of majoritarianism and the rise of Right. Majority of the recent scholarship has seen these changes in the light of the rise of the BJP. Hasan, on the other hand, tries to see these trends in Indian politics from an alternative vantage point, placing the Congress party at the centre of enquiry and exploring the *Crisis* of the once-dominant party. Although the book specifically refers to the time period between 2009 to 2019, the author builds upon her previous works and provides readers with a multi-dimensional, comprehensive, historical, detailed and analytical account by trying to locate the crisis in factors, both internal and external to the Congress party and the interface between the factors. She seeks to further study the role played by context, ideology and organization in making and unmaking of political parties.

The text is thematically divided into six chapters spanning across issues and trends in Indian Politics. Chapter One, titled 'Democratic Reorganization Eludes the Congress Party' shows how Congress traversed from being a party of conflict mediation, bargaining and consensus to a party characterized by organizational decay, atrophy, ideological obfuscation and leadership crisis. She gives a background of the factors which ailed the Congress since the time of former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and identifies reasons for the same, such as institutional erosion, organizational stagnation, irregular elections, a lost connection with grass-root level, side-lining of state leaders and centralization at the cost of party's ideology of consensus. This ultimately led to the breaking away of regional parties, defections, lack of intra-party democracy and internal resistance to change, despite Rahul Gandhi's keenness to democratize.

In Chapter Two, 'Collapse of the United Progressive Alliance', Hasan looks at the political fallout of the Congress Party in the 2014 general elections and identifies what went wrong during the UPA regime which preceded the elections. The Congress had lacked a cohesive ideological ground and

suffered from policy paralysis, leadership and organizational gap, unchecked corruption and indecisiveness. Despite the introduction of an array of progressive, social welfare legislation during its two tenures such as that of food security, rural employment guarantee, Right to Information, Congress could not take any credit for the same in wake of corruption scandals, incompetence, favouritism, the BJP's obstructionist tactics in Parliament, and a concerted effort by the powerful right-wing groups which wanted to see the end of Congress. This also got manifested in India Against Corruption Movement which drew the public sentiment against Congress, and both the capitalist class and media got inclined towards pro-business BJP.

In Chapter Three, 'The Gujarat Model and the Turn to the Right', the author critiques the much-revered Gujarat model of economic development and looks at the rightward shift of Indian Politics. The 2014 general elections were fought on the idea of development and Gujarat model was seen as a key example of development, led by the then Prime Ministerial candidate of the BJP, Mr. Modi, who was seen as a pro-business, strong leader, a 'Development Man' with great oratory skills and hopes for the masses. The BJP came to power and this uncritical acceptance of pro-business model led to a rightward turn of Indian politics. In contrast to a lacklustre campaign by the Congress party, BJP had an elaborate outreach programme. The author contextualises BJP's win in its electoral management with the support of RSS (and affiliated organizations) in providing a 'well-oiled political machine' and helping 'election engineering, propaganda, mobilization and booth management' with a dedicated cadre of grass-root workers. The elections witnessed an unprecedented use to techno-led mobilization and use of modern communication technology by the BJP, with the help of social media platforms like WhatsApp and Twitter.

In Chapter Four, 'Secular Politics on the Back Foot', the author writes that the BJP envisages India as a majoritarian nation-state rather than a pluralist multicultural one. It could consolidate a political majority beyond other factors of identity like caste, and religion took over. Unsure of a response to BJP's Hindutva, the Congress Party took to 'Soft Hindutva', which did no good to the electoral results of the Congress and in fact hampered the idea of secularism that the Congress Party had so far stood for. Furthermore, arguing against the accusations of Muslim appeasement, she opines that political pampering of Muslims by the Congress provided only a symbolic support and no substantial benefit to the Muslims.

In Chapter Five, 'Hindu Nationalism to the Fore', the author argues that in 2019 general elections, the BJP put forth an idea of majoritarian symbolism instead of development. Backed by enormous money and the support of electronic and print media, those elections were fought on a three-point campaign of Nationalism (national security, Pakistan and terrorism), Hinduism and anti-corruption. Hasan distinguishes between the post-independent 'inclusive nationalism' of the Congress and the 'Hindu nationalism' of the BJP. While material politics occupied a backstage, Congress could not build a counter-narrative highlighting its own idea of nationalism. BJP's massive victory in 2019 election shows, in her words, 'a structural shift in Indian politics reflected in the emergence of a de facto majoritarian democracy'.

In Chapter Six, 'Opposition Interrupted' Hasan takes a critical look at the events such as abrogation of Art 370 and 35A of the Constitution (pertaining to the Union territory of Jammu & Kashmir), settlement of Ayodhya dispute and Citizenship Amendment Act. She further points out at the erosion of institutions such as Election Commission of India, Central Vigilance Commission; dilution of Right to Information; usage of corporate power and election financing during 2019 elections. She points at the largely non-existent politics of Congress outside the Parliament and its non-impactful social media presence, which ultimately led to a weak opposition to the ruling party.

However, she emphasizes the fact that the Congress is the only party with social, intellectual and historical capital, having a pan-India footprint and that a liberal consolidation against the BJP is not possible without Congress. She, while identifying problems within the Congress, gives hope and suggests reforms. In a deeply divided polity where centrism and consensus don't seem to work, she advises Congress to widen its electoral bandwidth by banding together with opposition parties, strengthening the alliance-coalition framework, electing a leader to keep the party united, reconstructing its organizational structure across the states, conducting a pan-India membership drive and projecting as well propagating a clear alternative ideological narrative to the BJP by reaffirming its philosophy of secularism, nationalism, social justice while underlining its past achievements. She vouches for a democratic renewal of the Congress party in accordance with the contemporary needs.

Although she focuses upon Congress but refers largely to challenges facing the non-BJP parties and centrist parties in other democracies 'in the wake of upsurge of populist nationalism and right-wing parties.'

The author, by a wide coverage of primary and secondary sources, gives a comprehensive analysis of the subject matter and significantly contributes to the field of study pertaining to Indian politics and political parties. She draws her thesis from authentic sources and quite elaboratively provides an analysis about factors that led to the crisis of Congress and its impact on the Indian political scenario over the past decades. She explains her thesis in a quite lucid manner using easily comprehensible, crisp arguments.

The text provides useful insights to scholars of social sciences in general, and Indian politics in particular. It may prove useful for scholars dealing in election studies, psephology and study of party system and political parties. It may also be helpful to political analysts, journalists or readers interested in knowing politics, in general. Furthermore, it may provide some important inputs to the Congress party, owing to the various measures and reforms that the author suggests.

As compared to recent works on Indian politics like *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy* (2021) by Christophe Jaffrelot and *India After Modi: Populism and the Right* (2018) by Ajay Gudavarthy which see the changes in Indian Politics keeping the rise of BJP at the centre of enquiry, Hasan takes a more comprehensive view and views the changes from the perspective of the Congress party.

However, even though the author claims that her thesis applies to centrist parties in major democracies across the globe, she barely provides examples or gives references. Providing examples would have helped in substantiating her thesis better. Also, she doesn't give a hopeful picture of regional parties and fails to contemplate upon them in the text. She further fails to talk about parties such as Aam Aadmi Party which maintain a pragmatic silence on issues concerning minorities and practice a silent majoritarianism.

Withstanding these issues, the text certainly provides important and critical insights into the changing nature of Indian Politics and makes a strong case for future scholarship towards further research and exploration on the subject.

- Akanksha Sharma

PhD. Scholar
Department of Political Science
University of Delhi

Ray, N.(2021) India and Africa: The Road Ahead by, New Delhi, Indian Council of World Affairs, ₹918

India and Africa are the shore neighbors separated by the Indian Ocean. History is evident of their close friendship, cultural affinity, super bonding and cooperation. Africa is being the credal of human civilization and India is the ancient civilization in natural alliance and contemporary partners. Since time immemorial, India and Africa are linked through historical ties, trade and cultural relations. Although this relationship has lost direction in between the geopolitical importance of the 21st century but growing prominence of India in world politics once again brought these two reasons together. As we stand in 2022, Africa constitutes 54 countries and has 1.37 billion populations. According to the latest survey of the World Bank, seven out of ten developing economists of the world are from Africa. Apart from this, Africa has been home to 99% of world chromium, 11% of world oil, and 9% of world gas, huge deposits of gold, copper, manganese and cobalt. This is reason enough to state the growing importance of Africa in world politics. Therefore, it is no surprise that countries like India, China, USA and other developed countries want to establish positive and progressive relations with the African countries. However, India's relations with Africa are not gigantic like China and USA, for the reason being India's policy of cultural connection, soft power diplomacy and sharing African dreams creates natural relations with the African states. In fact, India's relation with Africa is a golden leaf in its foreign policy doctrine.

This book is a welcome addition to the growing literature on India-Africa relations and it is the outcome of the Conference on India-Africa relations held in Delhi in 2019, and all the contents are holding glorious writings of different experts positioned in various Academic fields. The selected papers mostly discuss India and Africa engagement in the context of global governance, democracy, common security and development challenges, diaspora and people to people connections also contain the perspectives shared by Hon'ble Vice President of India Shri M. Venkaih Naidu and Ministry of External Affairs, Shri TS Tirumurti

to attract the reader's attention. Overall this volume has created a roadmap for future India-Africa relations and helps the researcher in further research.

Dr. Nivedita Ray explores her excellent ideas in 'Strengthening India-Africa Ties: Initiatives, Approaches and Emerging Prospects' to make a better understanding among scholars about the different dimensions of Indians in Africa and Africans in India over the century. She rightly point out the significance of 'India- Africa Forum Summit' for both the India and Africa foreign policy objectives. Her writing also includes Indo-Africa partnership in the trade sector, security concerns, and defense cooperation over the period. Initially, India has developed maritime relationships with Mozambique, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar, Seychelles, and Mauritius, assisting in terms of military aid. No doubt India is the major fourth largest investor in Africa after the USA, UK and UAE, but the growing importance of China in Africa is putting difficult questions for India to develop its projects in Africa. So, India tries to diplomatically engage with African countries through Telemedicine, scholarships, defense trade, training and capacity-building programmes in the health, education, agriculture, counter-terrorism, maritime, peacekeeping, space and cyber security sectors. Pranav Kumar has rightly observed the importance of WTO in India- Africa increasing fair and systemic trade cooperation. Over the period major areas of convergence and cooperation between India- Africa are based on Agriculture, General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), Trade-related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), etc. However, in the 21st-century issues related to global trade governance create obstruction in India and Africa trade relations and leave far behind both these countries on the global trade map. Looking for the solutions to these issues, India and Africa need to explore new avenues of cooperation at multiple levels and make WTO more rule-driven, transparent, enlightened and equitable.

To reform International Economic Institutions and develop South-South cooperation, Priyanka Pandit provides vivid account of ideas that the coalition of global South can make an effective change in the

international economic organizations. Initially, the growing presence of global powers like China in India and African region put difficulties to develop fair and fastest trade relations. So, both need to clear their controversial areas and develop cooperation in these sectors. S. Shaji specifies in his chapter that the reason behind Asian involvement in Africa and its implementations for democratization and political reforms in the African states. To look into Asia's investment in Africa after the Post Cold war period creates a different picture of Africa in world politics. Chinese are mostly engaged through the public sector companies but not interested in facilitating domestic development and other side India connected through the substantial private companies with the various African states, which attracted certain criticism relating to democratization debates in Africa. In the last two decades, the involvement of these two Asian giants in Africa actively rebuilds the economies and concerns about the protection of human rights, sensitivity to the customs and traditions and non-interference to the domestic affairs of the African States. Sanjay Kumar Pradhan tries to overlap India Africa relations in the energy sector to make better footprints of the Indian companies in the African oil and natural gas market. Africa has now emerged as a hotspot of the global energy market. India's growing energy need in 21st century, creates big issues for future energy security concerns. To meet India's domestic needs, it seeks to maintain a strong partnership with African countries based on the principles of mutual respect and mutual benefit. Delhi needs to strengthen relations with AU member states to ensure good corporate governance, transparency and resource management with equity to play an assertive role in the African energy market. Chander Prakash Wadhwa in his research defines the role of India in UN Peacekeeping missions in Africa and how it works for mutual benefits. Looking to the recent decades Africa is the major contributor to the UN peacekeeping security challenges and out of the total operations Africa hosts 50 percent of these missions. India's help to these missions in Africa creates great scope for cooperation in both these countries in terms of bi-laterally as well as multilaterally.

Now terrorism is the global headache in international politics, and to make it more precise Arvind Kumar broadly looks into the various issues and challenges relating to terrorist activities in India and African states, also focusing on various terror networks and their mode of operations in both these countries. He has also the view that to counter these terrorist coalitions both are need to develop strong counter-terrorism cooperation with a strategic action plan. Highlighting the significance of public diplomacy in India- Africa relations Sanjukta Banerji mostly focuses on the role of the Indian ITEC programme, Indian cinema, civil societies, ICCR fellowship, and medical tourism in African states. Her research argues in the era of new diplomacy to promote south-south cooperation, P-2-P strategy is one of the modern methods to get close engagement with different African states. Promoting the role of Indian Diaspora in Africa Rajneesh Kumar Gupta and Paokholal Haokip both are looking different angles of India- Africa relations. Initially, Rajneesh Kumar rightly observes the significance of Diaspora in Anglophone Africa and divided them into four groups based on their numbers and activities. Mauritius is the only country in Africa having a large number of Indian Diaspora with possibilities of dominant role. In South Africa, Diaspora plays substantial role and the countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Nigeria, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi, and Zimbabwe Diasporas perform possibilities of marginal or indistinct role. To understand the role of Indian Diaspora in Francophone Africa Haokip goes through the history of Indian Diaspora in the West Indian Ocean region and analyzes the policy measures taken by Indian leaders from Nehru to Modi to make Indian Diaspora as a part of great Indian family. From his observations he suggests, that the Indian government needs to more particular Diasporic-centric policy towards Francophone African countries to get close relations with its Diasporas. Living in a digital world, social media played a major role in our day-to-day life. Nandini Sen tries to speak about the significance of Indian cinema, music and dance for the Indian Diaspora (especially third and fourth generation) settled in Africa. In countries like South Africa and Durban, Bollywood works as an Indian Cultural Export to reset socio-cultural and religious ties with its Diasporas.

This book is one of the momentous for research scholars to understand India and Africa relations in general to particular method. It covers several aspects like trade, energy, terrorism, diplomacy, diaspora and so on. Starting from India- Africa forum summit on defense and security fields and understanding the importance of WTO and IMF for India-Africa relations, this book address a unique model of development relevant to the priorities of both countries. It is not only lock up policy-focused discussions on developments in different countries but also highlights India's bilateral relations with different African states as well. All the contents of this book are clearly discussed by the author with adequate data and proper citations. This book shaped a new arena of academic research and suggestive for the Indian government to reset India-Africa relations in a gigantic way.

Banditarani Behera

Ph.D. Scholar

Center for Diaspora Studies

Central University of Gujarat,

Gandhinagar