State-Society Relations and Governance: Reflections on India
Semester 1 – 2016-2017
Instructor: Rahul Mukherji

Aims

This seminar will reflect on the relationship between the Indian state and society, and the conditions under which governance succeeds and fails in India. Public institutions within and outside the state embody social norms. Governance is produced when the play of institutions produces certain predictable social behaviour based on the dominant ideas or norms in society. We are interested not only in how certain types of institution induced behaviour are produced but also why institutions change.

A few examples will highlight this point. Indian corporations would behave differently when the economy was closed to international trade than under globalization. Similarly, citizens are likely to demand their rights when these rights are guaranteed by laws. They will demand work, education and privileged government information, if these have been legislated as the legitimate rights of citizens. Citizens living in democracies are likely to demand more from governments compared with situations where they lack voting rights.

The seminar will first engage with the comparative literature on the relationship between state and society in the process of development. Governance and development are viewed as social processes. The seminar will engage important theories of social change and persistence. It will interrogate the power of capitalism. Can the state be understood as being autonomous from the interests of capital? Does capitalism produce democracy? What is a developmental state? What is the political power of policy ideas? Do elite networks rather than the state engender governance?

We will interrogate comparative politics on India’s diverse experiences with governance and development. The country is the third largest economy measured in terms of purchasing power parity, alongside being the carrier of the largest number of poor people in the world. The process of development in India has occurred within a democratic framework.

The social science of comparative politics and historical sociology will be used to investigate how and why India is different. Can its unusual trajectory contribute to social science puzzles and theory enrichment? Some significant research puzzles discussed in this seminar include:

How did India become a democracy, despite having an underdeveloped capitalist class?
Why does the Indian economy grow rapidly, despite the country’s not fulfilling the requirements of a classic “developmental state”?

Calendar and Syllabus

1. 25.10.2016
   **Introduction: Social Power**
   We will discuss the organization of this class in this session. This is a free-thinking session. It will be used to introduce the class. Students are not expected to read for the first seminar class.

   Politics is largely about power relations. This session will discuss three dimensions of power. What are the three faces of power? Can we recognize the three faces of power in social life? Do they comprehensively tell us about power relations? We will try to see whether these faces of power manifest themselves in social and political life in India. Do institutions reflect power relations?


   **Supplementary**


2. 8.11.2016
   **Social Roots of the State: Capitalism and Democracy**
   Does capitalism produce democracy? How strong are the arguments in favour of the rise capitalism as the basis for democracy?


   **Supplementary**


3. 15.11.2016

**India’s Democracy**

Does India challenge the view that capitalism produces democracy? If capitalism did not produce democracy, what did? What is the evolving nature of Indian democracy?


*Supplementary Readings*


Christophe Jaffrelot, *India’s Silent Revolution* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003).


4. 22.11.2016

**Capitalism & Institutions**

Does capitalism produce institutions and institutional change? Do changes in technology and prices produce social and political effects.


*Supplementary*


5. 29.11.2016  
*Capitalism and India’s Institutions*  
Does the capitalist class determine economic governance in India? Or, is it the larger and more chaotic “dominant and proprietary classes” that shape India’s institutions? Can we define interest groups differently to understand how institutions are shaped?


*Supplementary*


6. 6.11.2016

*The State*

Can the state be viewed as an actor that is separate from the capitalist class and other powerful actors in society?

Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In,” in Peter B Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol, eds., *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 3-43.


*Supplementary*


7. 13.11.2016

*Developmental State*

What is a classic developmental state modelled after the East Asian success story? Can states pursue other trajectories as well?


*Supplementary*


*Is India a Developmental State?*

India seems not to be a classic developmental state. Can India therefore not develop in terms of economic growth and human well-being?


*Supplementary*


9. 10.01.2017

*State and Ideas*

How important are the policy ideas of bureaucrats, technocrats and the political elite? Are policy makers driven by powerful groups in society or do their own thoughts also matter? How do these thoughts become part of policy, institutions and governance?


*Supplementary*


10.17.01.2017

**Indian State and Ideas**

How important are the policy ideas within the Indian state for its institutions and governance?


**Supplementary**


11.24.01.2017

**Networks & Institutions**

Are institutions produced by social networks? The social capital literature seems to view connections or social networks as the basis of good institutions because they create trust. Networks can also create advocacy networks that change global and national level norms.


*Supplementary*


12.31.01.2017

*Elite Networks and Governance in India*

This section explores the social basis of development in India. Does this literature appeal to the social capital literature discussed in the previous week?


*Supplementary*


13.07.02.2017

*Politics of Redistribution in India*
This session will discuss more the state-centric accounts of the politics of redistribution in India. Redistributive politics refers to the process of transferring resources to the poor who cannot easily be served by the market.


*Supplementary*


**Prior Requirements**

This is an MA level class. What is required is a commitment to South Asia and to social science theory. The instructor and the lecturers are happy to work with students. Students are required to go through the readings mentioned just below the titles. This is essential. The supplementary materials are further readings for students who want to learn more about a particular topic. This material will be useful for research students, especially those who wish to present in a particular class.

**Organization**

This is a seminar class. It is builds on the Vorlesung titled: *Political Economy of South Asia* but is different from it. The demands on reading and discussion here greater than in the Vorlesung.

The first meeting will be a discussion on how we will run the seminar. From the second session onwards, we will have presenters who will present every week for about 10-15 minutes. These presentations will discuss the readings for the class. Students should present a short paper based on the readings, which can be blown-up into a larger paper of 5000-6000 words.
I will need a 1000 to 1500-word assignment on the discussions in class by every presenter. This short paper will summarize the presentation and comments received from the seminar participants. This paper will be turned in within a week after the presentation (Only those who present in week 2, we will get an extra week to submit the paper).

The essential readings will be uploaded on Moodle. Much of the supplementary material will be available in the library reserves. The essential readings are the minimal requirements for participating in this class. The supplementary material should be consulted by those who are making the seminar presentation. There is no limit to how much you can read.

I have pointed to additional resources in the following section titled: Scholarly Resources.

Students who desire a “Schein” must register on Moodle by the second week after the lecture begins (9 November 2016).

The password for registering for this class is: Governance 1617.

Assessment

Attendance in the Hauptseminar is voluntary for those who do not wish to get a ‘Schein’ at the semester’s end. For others, attendance is compulsory.

The short paper (1000-1500 word) will be due one week after the class presentation. The final paper submitted at the end of class can vary between 5000-6000 words. An exception will be made for those presenting in the second week. They can take two weeks to turn in the short paper.

Discussions in class carry 30% of the grade. The short paper will be 20% of the grade. And, the final paper will amount to half (50%) of the grade. It is important therefore to consistently participate in class to benefit from it and to earn a good grade.

**Scholarly Resources**

These resources are useful for writing your paper and if you want to develop a research interest on state-society relations, comparative politics and India.

*Journals:* The journals given below are scholarly in nature. They often carry papers on India. You can go to their web sites, if you are keen to learn more about this
class. Heidelberg University library should have either e-access or hard copies of these journals.

*Economic and Political Weekly*: [http://www.epw.in/](http://www.epw.in/)

*World Politics*

*Comparative Politics*

*Governance*

*Studies in Indian Politics*

*World Development*

*Pacific Affairs*

*Asian Survey*

*Contemporary South Asia*

*India Review*


*Contemporary South Asia*

*Journal of South Asian Development*

*Journal of Asian Studies*

*Leading newspapers*: *Economic Times* (India), *The Hindu* (India), *Indian Express* (India), *Times of India* (India).