intensified as the question of what made a true Muslim acquired greater significance” (p. 286).

Pernau's fifth major argument places domesticity and the remaking of gender relations at the center of middle-class formation, revealing similarities between cultural developments in Delhi and Bengal. Pernau demonstrates that, prior to the 1840s, it was not unusual for noblewomen to wield political influence and prioritize financial security, but the marginalization of nobility by colonial power combined with Islamic moral reform meant that women were gradually relegated more and more to domesticity and driven out of the public sphere. Echoing the works of Judith Walsh and Tanika Sarkar, she notes that the “new woman” was part of a “new patriarchy,” and her life was shaped increasingly by the restrictions of the reform program.

Pernau’s arguments about the fuzziness of Muslim middle-class identity, its engagement with the public sphere, and its practices of “modernity,” including secularization, are significant interventions in South Asian historiography, which have also been noted in discussions about the middle class in different geographic locations and in its transnational narrative.2 Her deep knowledge of the archive, combined with analytical arguments, historicizes the global process of middle-class formation in the context of Delhi Muslims and succeeds best in its attention to local changes instead of demonstrating “transfer processes in both directions.” It is thus an invaluable contribution to the understanding of Muslim identity in North India and its interaction with processes of global change.

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Divided We Govern: Coalition Politics in Modern India. By SANJAY RUPARELIA.
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The 2014 national elections in India were repeatedly described as a political watershed. Not only did a single party capture a majority of seats for the first time in thirty-four years, but for the first time ever, this party was not the Indian National Congress. Instead, the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by the controversial hardliner Narendra Modi, secured a stunning victory. The BJP's singular breakthrough only served to remind observers of the central role coalition governments have played in the governing of the world’s largest electoral democracy. Indeed, the BJP under Modi continued this trend, and governs at the helm of a coalition rather than on its own.

Coalition politics is thus clearly a crucial subject for any understanding of India’s political present and future as much as of its recent past. In Divided We Govern, Sanjay Ruparelia provides valuable theoretical and empirical contributions to this

effort through fine-grained narratives of specific coalitional governments in India. In particular, he focuses on governing coalitions that did not form around either of India’s two large national forces (the Congress and BJP). Instead, these coalitions assembled “Third Front” governments out of a diverse array of smaller and more regionalized parties.

Empirically, the benefits of Ruparelia’s narratives are obvious: they provide the thick details of how such unique coalitions were formed, the manner in which they governed, and why they perished. Theoretically, such narratives are well-suited to highlight factors discounted by more conventional institutionalist studies of electoral coalitions. In particular, Ruparelia believes that they can reveal the centrality of elite decisions and agency often ignored by more structural frameworks.

Ruparelia’s efforts also yield more localized payoffs in advancing our understanding of coalition politics in India. Indeed, the book’s greatest contributions come from his meticulous documenting of dynamics within three important Third Front governments in India: the Janata Party (1977–80), the National Front (1989–91), and the United Front (1996–98). His narratives draw on extensive research of primary and secondary written sources, as well as interviews with key actors involved with coalition processes. His accounts are treasure troves for any serious scholar of coalition politics in India, and will become an invaluable reference for these crucially understudied periods of political history.

Ruparelia excels in illustrating how close readings compel a reevaluation of both the policy achievements and the elite motivations of each Third Front coalition. To a significant degree, all three have been dismissed by most observers as failures—short-lived experiments with underwhelming policy achievements. This failure was often ascribed to elites at the helm of each coalition, whose rhetorical commitment to social justice was belied by a devastating blend of ineptitude and opportunism. Ruparelia is careful to acknowledge the degree to which these portrayals ring true. His narratives make clear that each coalition was indeed marred by factional disputes among leaders jockeying for power, often at the expense of advancing their programmatic promises to constituents.

Yet Ruparelia’s account also makes clear that blanket dismissals of India’s coalition governments as bickering failures are inadequate and even misleading. Each also achieved nontrivial policy goals in their brief tenures. For example, many have recognized the Janata Party’s contribution in forging a diverse array of parties into a coalition that confronted and defeated an increasingly authoritarian Indira Gandhi. Yet the coalition’s achievement was not simply in defeating Gandhi, but in passing legislation that reinvigorated Indian democracy. These measures included expanding the power of opposition leaders and expanding protections of provincial governments against central intervention. For its part, the National Front strengthened institutional mechanisms devoted to center-state relations and implemented a historic expansion of caste-based affirmative action quotas. Perhaps least acknowledged have been the foreign policy achievements of these coalition governments, included overtures to India’s alienated neighbors, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Tackling a subject of such convolution with sufficient nuance is hard work, and can make for dense reading. The valuable accounts of a breathtaking array of parties, leaders, and deal-making offered here may be overwhelming for nonspecialists. Yet the book would still have benefited from a more sustained effort to weave together his theoretical framework more explicitly into the narratives themselves.
The main framework Ruparelia offers centers on the concept of elite “political judgement,” which is structured by five intellectual traits, including “a focus on particulars,” “pragmatism,” “strategic reasoning,” and “a degree of detachment” (p. 35). Yet there could have been a greater attempt to connect discussions of specific leaders’ decisions within his narratives to these underlying theoretical concepts. Doing so would have helped fulfill the goal of infusing an appropriate theoretical appreciation for leader agency into institutionalist studies of coalitions. Weaving this conceptual framework into the dense narratives may have also made them more accessible to nonspecialists.

Such concerns aside, there is no doubt that Ruparelia’s careful study has made a valuable and lasting contribution to our understanding of Indian politics in the coalition era. His account is especially topical given the perilous times for oppositional politics in India today. Not only has the BJP sought to entrench a style of majoritarian politics since coming to office, but Prime Minister Modi has made greater efforts to centralize authority than any leader since Indira Gandhi. Given the weakened state of the Congress Party itself, checks on Modi’s efforts may need to come from elsewhere. The political judgment of Third Front forces could once again prove crucial in rebuffing threats to India’s remarkable democracy.

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Religion in the Himalaya takes all sorts of new forms: videos of gods on cell phones, compact disks of Tibetan lama eulogies, photocopied pilgrim guides, and websites for Nepali goddesses, to name just a few. Because they do not mesh cleanly with the scriptural categories by which academics have traditionally attempted to understand religion, such modern phenomena are often brushed under the carpet or touted as oddities. Thankfully, the scholars included in the edited volume Religion and Modernity in the Himalaya have begun the arduous task of filling the lacuna of research on religion in the modern Himalaya. Spanning many nations and religious traditions, the Himalaya is nevertheless defined as its own region of academic interest, and the volume explores both how modernity conditions religion and, conversely, how religion shapes modernity.

Posing modernity as “an era of the consciousness of the new” (p. 7), which is not an objective social fact but a “powerful field of popular discourse and cultural production” (p. 110), the volume argues that the Himalaya is characterized by two features: peripherality and emplacement. Peripherality refers to the tension between center and margin, and to how many in the Himalaya perceive themselves as being on the borders of modernity. For instance, in chapter 2, Luke Whitmore examines “the local need to develop a methodology of ‘bifocality’” (p. 25). Emplacement indicates the ongoing negotiation between people, communities, and place. As co-editor Megan Adamson Sijapati writes in the introduction, “The importance of place to religious practitioners’ understanding of themselves and the divine and material worlds around them cannot be overstated” (p. 10).