

States and its federalist system of social service delivery makes the United States a particularly receptive environment to émigré capacity-building policies designed to ensure that émigrés have access to social service programs, such as those designed by Mexico and other Latin American countries.

*From Here and There* also explores the limits of transnationalism, one that the new initiatives by Mexico and other Latin American countries to their émigrés have not overcome. When Mexico reached out to Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) beneficiaries in the United States, it was surprised and disappointed to find that it had less of a connection to these émigrés, ones who migrated as children or young teens, than with the older migrants, who participated in programs to facilitate health care and education access. Migrants who had left Mexico at a younger age and had weaker ties to Mexico reported an “institutional and social rejection” (p. 145) from Mexico. Transnational connections have long been found to diminish among the descendants of migrants, but this finding suggests that transnational connections may weaken even more rapidly. Déllano Alonso indicates that Mexico is trying to develop programming that targets DACA beneficiaries and the DREAMer community more broadly, but these programs were in their infancy, so she does not offer an assessment of their effectiveness.

Most of the project’s fieldwork was conducted before the 2016 US presidential campaign and the election of President Trump. Although there are some references in the final chapter to his increasingly vitriolic attacks on immigrants, there is little assessment of how the Trump era has changed the transnational policies of Mexico or other Latin American countries. I would be particularly interested in a discussion of the effect of Trump-era policies on the abilities of Mexican and other Latin American consulates to develop alliances with state and local governments in the United States, particularly in the new areas of migrant destination, which are more likely to be led by Republican governors and legislatures.

*From Here and There: Diaspora Policies, Integration, and Social Rights Beyond Borders* offers a thoughtful study of national efforts to expand the substantive meanings of transnational engagement among émigrés by building their capacities in the country of destination. It is also careful to show the potential limits of these efforts by immigrant-sending countries that target the descendants of the émigrés, including children who emigrated when they were young and experienced most of their education and political socialization in the receiving country. Alexandra Déllano Alonso demonstrates conclusively that Mexico has creatively developed an institutional support network to empower its émigrés in the United States and to potentially sustain their engagement with Mexico.

**Religious Freedom and Mass Conversion in India.** By Laura Dudley Jenkins. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. 320p. \$89.95 cloth.  
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— Amit Ahuja, *University of California, Santa Barbara*  
aahuja@polsci.ucsb.edu

Religious conversion—a shift in membership from one community of faith to another—is often a source of contention across multireligious societies. Laura Dudley Jenkins’s *Religious Freedom and Mass Conversion in India* explores the substance and forms of both mass conversion and anti-conversion politics.

Even though the right to religious freedom is enshrined in the Indian constitution, the practice of religious conversion, especially mass conversion, remains controversial. Jenkins considers three case studies of religious mass conversion: Christian mass conversion movements of lower castes in colonial India, the embrace of Buddhism by Dalits (former untouchables) in 1956 under the leadership of their champion Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, and the conversion of Christians in Mizoram to Judaism and their subsequent migration to Israel in the 2000s. She shows that, in each of these cases, the spiritual sincerity and individual agency of converts are widely questioned. Critics allege that converts are not spiritually motivated but are instead driven by material or political gains. Others argue that the unsuspecting converts have little say in the process, because they are vulnerable to the manipulative designs of religious evangelists. Conversions are challenged more frequently when the converts come from marginalized sections of society: the poor, Dalits, Adivasis (indigenous tribal communities), and women. The obstacles to mass conversion take multiple forms. Jenkins illustrates three of these obstacles: anti-conversion laws, the denial of access to affirmative action benefits, and subversive rumors.

Why should we care about religious conversion? Viewing conversion mostly from the vantage point of the marginalized, Jenkins reminds us that, to the disadvantaged, religious conversion offers a means of social, political, and spatial mobility. When impediments appear in the path of this freedom, they rob the marginalized of their voice and choice. The threat to exit the faith gives the marginalized a voice to demand social reform and better treatment by coreligionists. In the spirit of Albert O. Hirschman’s (1970) *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, without the threat of exit, loyalty of the marginalized is obtained without granting them voice. Additionally, alternate faith communities offer the marginalized choices to find fraternity and respect.

The normative thrust of the book is powerful. But freedoms, especially in practice, do not exist in a vacuum:

they are sensitive to the political and social context in which they are embedded. It is therefore important to consider a few aspects of this context. First, Jenkins views the right to convert as a precious religious freedom because of the promise of fraternity and equality it holds for the marginalized. The experience of conversion does not always validate this expectation, however. Lower-caste Hindus have often migrated to other faiths in search of equality, but they continue to be discriminated against by their coreligionists even after conversion. Among Indian Muslims, the *Ashraf* (upper-class elites, often of Arab or upper-caste descent) continue to discriminate against the *Ajlaf* (lower class, often backward-caste Hindu converts) and the *Arzal* (Dalit Muslims). Dalit Christians complain about their segregation and unequal treatment in churches. Higher-ranked Jat Sikhs refuse to acknowledge Dalit Sikhs as their social equals.

The unfulfilled promises of mobility and fraternity are particularly problematic. Religion, as a totalizing institution, makes substantial claims on an individual's life. Even under ideal conditions, religious conversion cannot be repeated or reversed easily. Jenkins recognizes that religious conversion in India has failed to deliver on its promise. Still, the book does not grapple with the reality that the stigmatization of converts is not a product of suspicion of their agency or the sincerity of their motivations, but rather is attached to their perceived castes of origin, which neither their new faith communities nor society fully forget.

Second, the book highlights the benefits of the freedom to convert for marginalized communities. But occasionally, freedoms also have unintended consequences. The experience of mass conversion in India shows that it rarely extends to an entire group; some members convert, whereas others do not. Mass conversion, then, can create new lines of cleavage and foment religious division within a marginalized group. Despite sharing interests and grievances, a religiously divided marginalized group is likely to struggle to act collectively in support of its demands.

Third, Jenkins interprets the politics of religious mass conversion within the minority–majority framework. According to the 2004 Indian National Election Study (INES), a nationwide and representative survey of 27,183 Indian voters conducted by the Center for Study of Developing Societies, 54% of respondents were in favor of a legal ban against religious conversion. These attitudes vary across faiths, with 58% of Hindus, 48% of Muslims, 45% of Sikhs, and 30% of Christians either fully or partly agreeing with a ban against religious conversion. The figures corroborate Jenkins's assertion that minority faiths are more supportive of the religious freedom to convert than the majority Hindus.

At the same time, among minority faith communities, opposition to religious conversion appears to vary widely. Attitudes toward conversion also vary among the marginalized across states. To take just one example, 75% of

Hindu Dalits in Uttar Pradesh, the North Indian state that is home to India's strongest Dalit party, are opposed to religious conversion, as compared to 50% of Hindu Dalits in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. If religious conversion does indeed hold the promise of emancipation for the marginalized, why does their support for religious conversion vary across Indian states? It is important to both recognize and understand this difference in conversion-related attitudes, because it hints at an unevenness in the politics of religious conversion across different faith groups and among the marginalized.

Fourth, Jenkins highlights how Hindu insecurity fuels the opposition to mass conversion. To comprehend the threat it poses to the freedom of mass conversion, however, it is essential to understand the process that sustains this insecurity. Mass conversion constitutes a collective act of rejection of a faith; it therefore fuels demographic anxiety in a multireligious society. These fears and anxieties are widely shared in the Indian subcontinent because of historical legacies; religious cleavages have been prominent in competitive politics since the colonial era. The colonial state began to count religious groups in the census and created separate electorates on the basis of religion. In a multireligious environment then, numbers became a currency of power. The partition of India—the catastrophe that forced the migration of some 15 million people, triggered horrific religious violence, and resulted in an estimated 2 million deaths—was based on headcounts of religious communities: Muslim-majority areas of British colonial India were allotted to Pakistan and Hindu-majority regions to India.

Since independence, a number of factors have reinforced India's demographic anxiety, including the decennial census, electoral mobilization, religious violence, and ethno-religious insurgencies. For example, the first census after independence reported that 84.1% of India was Hindu. This number had fallen to 79.8% by 2011 and is likely to decline further in the 2021 census, making it an emotive issue for the upcoming 2024 parliamentary elections. Religion is widely invoked in political mobilization in India. Given this backdrop, political entrepreneurs benefit from stoking demographic anxieties. Mass conversion plays no part in demographic change, and yet it continues to be politicized to fuel fear and anxiety.

This discussion should not take anything away from the strengths of Laura Dudley Jenkins's book. It has arrived at a moment when alarm bells are already sounding about the quality of India's democracy at a time of ascendant Hindu nationalism. Not just religious freedoms but also an entire set of citizenship-linked freedoms are under threat. Among religious minorities, a feeling has begun to take hold that their security and well-being are no longer guaranteed by constitutional provisions but are contingent on the goodwill of the majority. The book contributes to the conversation on religious rights and faith-based collective action in South Asia.