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THE DYNAMICS OF INDIAN POLITICAL FACTIONS

A STUDY OF DISTRICT COUNCILS IN THE STATE OF MAHARASHTRA

BY

MARY C. CARRAS

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Rockford College, Rockford, Illinois

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FOREWORD

This is a remarkable piece of work, a quantum step forward in the political science research of American scholars of South Asia. It combines the best of many strands only now beginning to emerge: a fluent command of a local language, a detailed substantive knowledge of a local situation, the insistence on a set of controlled comparisons beyond the single phenomenon or single time–single place style of analysis, the careful collection of fresh primary data from controlled interviewing and local records, the difficult translation of such data into measurable variables, strengthening the reference point to disciplinary theory, the framing of testable hypotheses, the application of the most sophisticated statistical techniques available to test the hypotheses and the interpretations of the results in tangible, substantive conclusions. This is the mix that promises to enrich our understanding of phenomena in South Asia and to link this understanding to the mainstream of disciplinary advance. Dr Carras has carried them all out well and I can report every one of the skills was acquired from scratch for the project through a mixture of personal perseverance and good taste that is truly remarkable.

The conclusion is a bit too clearcut for my own bias in favor of the impenetrable complexity of human behavior. The fact that this study finds that the prime mover of factional formation lies in the economic sphere makes me even more wary, perhaps because several generations of doctrinaire theoreticians bereft of data have insisted it must be so. Nonetheless, her basic finding is an interesting one that the fundamental political cleavage in India – or in Maharashtra, at any rate – is traceable to competing forms of economic organization represented by private enterprise groups on the one hand, and collective or cooperative economic interests on the other, and that this dichotomy is reflected, in turn, in competing policy orientations within and between party and government. Recent regional and national events could well have been predicted by focussing on this division.

But in all, this is a most worthwhile venture and I commend it to your careful reading.

RICHARD D. LAMBERT

University of Pennsylvania

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To my Mother, Urania,
and the Memory of my Father, Elias

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