
Bowles, Paul and John Harriss, eds, *Globalization and Labour in China and India: Impacts and Responses*, Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010, 288pp.

Much has been written regarding China and India and their experiences with globalization. This collection covers considerable ground, focusing on the impacts and responses of workers to globalization and liberalization in rural and urban contexts in both countries. There are five chapters each on China and India along with a substantive introduction and conclusion. There is also Greg Flynn and Robert O'Brien's contribution on the use of domestic legal tools to advance global labour solidarity responses to influence corporate behaviour.

Paul Bowles' introductory chapter discusses three paradigms for interpreting the much-contested concept of 'globalization'. These are: 1) neoclassical liberalism; 2) anti-neoliberal globalization; and 3) multi-centred statism. He suggests that all three paradigms posit their own particular problems and identifies specific sites where globalization's impacts might be most felt. He also illustrates strategies at local, national and global levels that might be most appropriate for labour. He states that the book's contributions "remind us of the differentiated nature of the working class, the difficulties, possibilities and limits of organized responses in these two countries and the complexities of the interactions between globalization, state and labour" (p.3).

Several authors argue that processes such as the informalization of labour, and many aspects of economic restructuring predate the generally accepted onset of neoliberalism. Readers are invited to understand the interplay of domestic and international pressures in shaping how both states have liberalized alongside regulations, shaping interactions with global capital and the internal dynamics of China and India.

Some chapters discuss tensions around recent labour legislation or other policy initiatives such as China's 2008 Labour Contract Law (e.g., Chris King-Chi Chan, Pun Ngai and Jenny Chan's chapter) and several social security programs for unorganized workers legislated by India's federal government (V. K. Ramachandran and Vikas Rawal). Haiyan Wang, Richard Applebaum, Francesca Degiuli and Nelson Lichtenstein also analyze the Labour Contract Law concluding that the legislation, which has drawn opposition from both Chinese and overseas capital, is largely an "effort to harness conflict within a legal framework, thereby channeling anger away from direct labour militancy against the government" (p.100).

Xiao-yuan Dong, Paul Bowles and Hongqin Chang discuss the rapid, dramatic changes in China's rural economy wrought by liberalization and globalization, their impacts on patterns of labour allocation, rural incomes and widening intra-rural income inequality. They also examine government policy efforts to manage the most negative social impacts. Blecher explores the uneven distribution of 'globalization' across China and divergent labour politics of three regions. He too suggests that through embedding labour relations in a new legal superstructure and enacting labour legislation, while trying to curb the most egregious labour practices of employers,

the Chinese state seeks to divert labour protest towards arbitration and mediation and ultimately to control the working class while reinvigorating state-run unionism via the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU).

Manfred Bienefeld evaluates China's future in a crisis-ridden neoliberal international economic system, attempting to sketch the political forces shaping China's future, and offering a best and worst case scenario. For him, prospects for China to build a stable, prosperous and democratic society hinge upon whether the state can "contain – and attenuate – the relentless neoliberal pressure for market empowerment, both at the domestic, and the international, levels." (p. 227)

Ramachandran and Rawal explore impacts of liberalization and globalization on rural India since the acceleration of neoliberal policies in India after 1991, yet also offer a historical perspective. Highly critical of Indian state intervention which has seen rural agricultural workers and their households under attack on multiple fronts, they conclude that the "solution to the agrarian question involves both direct class struggle in the diverse conditions of the Third World countryside (in the Indian context it involves the struggle against landlordism, moneylender-merchant exploitation and caste and gender oppression) *as well as* the struggle against the new onslaught by imperialism and domestic bourgeoisies" (p.127).

The late Kalyan Sanyal and Rajesh Bhattacharya tackle informalized self-employment in India and explore the potential for new forms of labour activism. They contend that while a part of India's informal economy is integrated to global or domestic capital through sub-contracting and putting out, an even larger part of it constitutes a non-capitalist production space. For them, a " 'redundant' labour force emerges as a product of exteriorization of labour by capital, the social outcome of the *exclusionary* expansion of capital that relegates the victims of its expansion – dispossessed informal producers, the *detritus* of modern capitalism – to a non-capitalist outside, thus reproducing a basic fault line running through the economy" (p.155). Discussing modalities of informal workers' struggles, they highlight squatting as resistance to capital, and emphasize community-based mobilization instead of trade unionism or political party-backed industrial action.

Supriya Roy Chowdhury considers the modalities of industrial disputes and the politics of labour in Bangalore, which

has undergone rapid industrial transformation driven by Indian and transnational capital. Drawing primarily from labour disputes in five major manufacturing enterprises, he argues that while the changing nature of capitalism means that the objective basis of exploitation and the face of class conflict are “more amorphous than they were during earlier phases of industrialization when manufacturing capital met labour face to face on the shopfloor” (p.185), the fundamental opposition of interests remains the same. He calls for a broader definition of the working class that includes the trade union movement and informal sector/casualized workers, and to rethink and reenergize strategies for labour activism that address changing forms of capitalism in a financialized global economy.

Barbara Harriss-White reviews the impact of globalization and the financial crisis on India’s petty commodity production. She explores two aspects of India’s informal economy, “the persistence of small firms and their regulation by social institutions rather than by the state” (p.131), in a nuanced, theoretical contribution that seeks to distinguish self-employment/petty commodity production from wage labour. Part of Rohini Hensman’s chapter considers Indian trade union responses to globalization, arguing that the assault on labour rights in India long predates 1991, charting several significant moments of state and capital’s attacks on workers over recent decades. The remainder discusses nationalism versus internationalism, considering global responses to globalization by unions such as the social clause. Hensman calls for “an alternative model of globalization that is superior to the neoliberal model” (p.202), and a new global agenda for labour based on a mutually respectful discussion and debate among workers across the world.

While this book shares some interesting and varied analyses, there are some gaps. Hensman, and Flynn and O’Brien’s chapters feel a little dated and their proposals are trapped within the parameters of capitalism. They overlook substantive movement and scholarly critiques of labour standards linkages/social clause approaches which cannot be neatly labeled as nationalistic, and which emerge from a systemic analysis of global capitalism (see for example D’Souza, 1997 and Kelsey 1999). For example, Radha D’Souza (1997) contends that “[w]hereas within nations, workers may seek rights vis-a-vis their own national governments to a greater or lesser extent, in the international arena, the issue is one of allowing labour to become a tool in trade disputes between nations.

From a democratic rights standpoint, incorporating labour rights into international trade regimes limit the scope of labour within nations to influence their wages and conditions of work. It makes workers more vulnerable to the vagaries of international trade.”

A stronger focus on the gendered dimensions of both globalization’s impacts and resistance would also have been welcome. The book might also pay more heed to the ongoing Indian militarized state repression of social movements – particularly against Adivasis and the rural poor (D’Souza, 2009) and the effect this has on present and future spaces of resistance. Some focus on the relationship between Indian and Chinese capital going global and connections to their respective national contexts might also be helpful: are their implications for labour? And in turn, what might be the scope and modalities for solidarity struggles against the behaviour of Chinese and Indian corporate or finance capital among Indian, Chinese and international labour/activist networks? This collection will interest students and scholars of development studies, political science, labour studies and economics.

Bibliography

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