The lack of adequate monetary compensation is not the only problem plaguing the Indian legal system. During Mrs. Gandhi’s tenure the judiciary was frequently demoralized, owing to various forms of blatant political interference. Unfortunately, none of the essays in this volume explicitly dwell upon that period, which saw a significant erosion of the norms of judicial neutrality in India. The piece by George C. Kozolowski does deal with is a more blatant form of political interference—the Shah Banu case. He sharply illustrates the adverse effects on judicial norms when politicians seek to advance short-term political gains. As segments of the Indian Muslim community attacked the Supreme Court decision granting alimony to a divorced Muslim woman, the Congress (I) introduced legislation that overrode the Supreme Court judgement.

The flouting of the legal order is sadly not confined to the ruling party. Yogendra Malik’s essay demonstrates beyond doubt the complete disregard of election financing laws that parties characterize parties of every ideological coloration. As India increasingly enters the electronic age and as videos and television acquire increasing popularity, the costs of contesting elections will steadily increase. Under these conditions the temptation to fund campaigns in illicit ways will only grow unless civic groups can impose external constraints.

This volume also contains essays on poverty alleviation and the status of women under the law. What is conspicuously absent is a chapter on the growth of the civil liberties and human rights movement in India. Though at an incipient stage, these groups are increasingly making their presence felt by litigating on behalf of minorities and the economically marginalized. While they have yet to create any major legal landmarks, they have successfully placed hitherto undiscussed issues on the agenda. For example, long before international human rights organizations focussed on human rights violations in Punjab and Kashmir, indigenous legal groups had courageously taken the government to task for a systematic pattern of human rights violations in the two states. The efforts of such groups not only call for scholarly examination but acclaim. After all, their unstinted efforts have gone some ways to ensure that the rule of law does not steadily disappear from the India polity.

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A book that promises to assess "prospects for democracy" in a stubbornly undemocratic society like that of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) risks succumbing either to wishful thinking or doom-saying. But by the end of this fine collection of essays on contemporary Chinese politics Andrew Nathan has placed the reader in a position to see with real clarity and objectivity what these prospects are in terms of obstacles to be overcome and opportunities to be exploited.

Nathan believes that the current regime in Beijing is weak ("the weakest in PRC history" [p. 206]). But it is also politically entrenched and ill-prepared to take the steps necessary to reform itself. Those who support a democratic alternative include members of the current regime who escaped the purges of 1989, exiled and imprisoned dissidents, and broad segments of the urban population. These democrats cannot win

the day without support from above. This is not because Chinese are culturally incapable of independent political action. The problem of transition away from authoritarianism no longer hinges on the absence of democrats or a politically informed public. Since at least the latter stages of the Cultural Revolution (1968 on) groups of democratic activists, disillusioned with Maoism, have emerged in cities and towns all over the PRC, building a momentum and establishing a presence that became graphically apparent during the democracy movement of 1989. The principal obstacle to democracy is the regime itself and the constellation of interests it represents in the Communist Party and the military. And yet, as Nathan convincingly argues, democracy may be the only way out of the regime’s current dilemmas. Political reform could restore legitimacy through elections or less direct forms of representation and, possibly, spur economic reforms. Deng Xiaoping had his chance to move on these issues in the spring of 1989 when the urban public vocally swung in favor of political reform. Deng’s heir apparent, economic reformer Zhao Ziyang, made it clear that, insofar as he was concerned. Beijing was worth a bow to mass opinion. Instead, Deng shoved Zhao aside and reconstituted a council of elders, the so-called “gang of oldies” [laoren bang], to run the country.

Nathan highlights the politically contingent nature of 1989’s outcome in Beijing by contrasting it with the reform process in Taiwan. In 1986 the aged and ill President Chiang Ching-kuo used his unassailable prestige to push through democratic reforms in response to an unfavorable international situation and mounting domestic pressure for democratization. As Deng had proved earlier in the realm of economic reform, progress is possible even in an authoritarian, faction-ridden context if a leader allied with public opinion acts decisively. Of course, such moments are rare in any political system. Following Nathan’s analysis, particularly his account of the endemic factionalism plaguing Chinese politics, one expects the next democratic impulse from above to emanate from a politically weak reform faction opposed by a conservative group of similarly limited capacities with an ambivalent military waiting in the wings.

Compiled and completed in the aftermath of the June 4, 1989 repression of the democracy movement, China’s Crisis includes essays written in 1973 but mainly composed during the eighties. Nathan’s intention is not only to move the reader toward a better understanding of where Chinese politics rests now but also to show how the analysis of Chinese politics is done. Nathan prefaces this process-oriented approach with “confessions of a China specialist.” In fact, Nathan has been one of the most successful practitioners of the art and has little to confess by way of error. Early on, while others were admiring the political potential of a reform-minded Chinese bureaucracy or the luck and pluck of Deng Xiaoping, he put his money on two conceptual horses: factionalism and democracy. The first helped him pull away the facade of Chinese politics to reveal the highly personal, clientistic nature of power struggles and policy-making. In one sense this is simply a Chinese version of Kremlinology, arcane investigations into who is doing what to whom at the top. But Nathan also gave these investigations theoretical rigor and pioneered reflections on the “vertical” nature of Chinese society which “trellis”-like provides the framework for the growth of all manner of social and political foliage and fruit. His insights have been taken up by other authors to show how such structures, and the factionalism they engender, pervade Chinese society and politics at all levels and produce such diverse phenomena as political corruption, the informal economy, and circles of dissidents in and out of the government.

The second force, democracy, seemed to many a decade or more ago still to be an alien notion in China and therefore weak to the point of irrelevance. But Nathan