Human Rights Mechanism in South Asia. By Shveta Dhaliwal. New York, New York: Routledge International, 2017. Pp. xiv, 260. ISBN: 978-1-138-21864-2. US$150.00.

Human Rights Mechanism in South Asia is an insightful look not only into human rights in South Asia, but also into recurring rights violations occurring worldwide. Pulling from human rights court systems throughout the world, from the UN to individual country and regional systems, this book's appeal is not limited to legal scholars and professionals; it easily extends to a variety of social and political science readers as well. The focus on South Asia, defined as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) members of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, is apparent throughout. This book progresses from a history of human rights into an examination of how to strengthen and improve the protection of human rights, specifically in South Asia.

Following a well-thought-out preface addressing both the goals of the book and the limitations caused by the ongoing evolution of discourse on human rights, Shveta Dhaliwal begins with a look into the conception of, and shifting views on, human rights. What follows is a comprehensive review of human rights from religious, philosophical, and legal perspectives throughout history, from the religious works of Confucius, to the political views of Ancient Greece and Rome, and into present day. Naturally, given the focus of the book, Indian views on human rights throughout the ages are of particular focus, and the first chapter does an excellent job of incorporating worldwide mechanisms.

Chapter 2 narrows its focus to regional human rights mechanisms in Europe and Inter-American regimes, before transitioning into African and Arab regimes in the following chapter. These mechanisms and their evolutions are described succinctly, yet with enough detail to explain their significance in creating South Asia's human rights mechanism. Dhaliwal smoothly lays out both the history and expert theories on why and how these regional

mechanisms came to be. As the book progresses, so too does the elucidation of why a study of these mechanisms is essential for developing a successful South Asia mechanism.

Dhaliwal then seamlessly shifts into the focus of the book: the current and emerging human rights mechanisms in South Asia. Beginning by acknowledging the vast cultural differences between the SAARC countries, she expertly draws them together through their various types of human rights violations, from human trafficking to a variety of in-country abuses. Specifically, she notes the common theme in the region of people regularly denying, minimizing, or outright ignoring human rights and the role of the SAARC countries in promoting and encouraging acknowledgment and protection of these rights.

Before delving into the specifics of human rights violations and mechanisms throughout South Asia, Dhaliwal takes the time to explain the history and development of the eight countries that currently comprise SAARC. This includes loosely defining various religious groups and sub-cultures found throughout South Asia and the interactions between these people through civil wars and the creation of new countries. In doing so, she breaks down what might otherwise be complicated references to various cultures into understandable passages.

At this point, the book begins to truly hone in on the particulars of human rights violations in South Asia, laid out by country. This includes the underlying cultural and historical differences in these countries that have led to each type of violation. Naturally seguing into the role of SAARC in developing appropriate and necessary human rights mechanisms, Dhaliwal also includes a detailed explanation of the creation and purpose of SAARC, as well as steps it has taken to curb these violations, beginning with its second summit in 1986, which first introduced the initiative to implement a human rights mechanism. SAARC's focus on various human rights, including those of children and woman, is discussed topic by topic, allowing the reader to easily follow SAARC's history of focusing on specific violations.

On occasion the writing is a bit awkward, but the reader should still notice Dhaliwal's exceptional job proposing detailed ways in which the SAARC countries could adapt aspects of all of the previously discussed human rights mechanisms outside of South Asia into protections for their own citizens. The South Asia human rights system that she proposes draws from each of the preceding mechanisms, carefully analyzing both important aspects to include and pitfalls to be avoided, concluding with a thoughtful, long-term roadmap for establishing a comprehensive South Asia human rights mechanism.

Rena Seidler
Research and Instructional Services Librarian
Robert H. McKinney School of Law
Ruth Lilly Law Library
Indianapolis, IN U.S.A.
doi:10.1017/jli.2017.36