Mobilizing Emotions in South Asian Politics

International Conference
8-9 February 2016
CEIAS - Rooms 638-641
190 avenue de France 75013 Paris

This conference concludes the research program "Emotions and Political Mobilizations in the Indian Subcontinent" (EMOPOLIS), jointly sponsored by Emergence(s)-Mairie de Paris and the Centre for South Asian Studies-CNRS/EHESS. It is organized with the support of the Center for the History of Emotions-Max Planck Institute for Human Development (Berlin) and of the Fondation Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
Contentious politics in South Asia, in its many forms, has been studied through a variety of theoretical angles: class- and status-based patterns of domination, organizational base, political contexts and opportunities, ideological frames, etc. Its emotional dynamics, however, is yet to be explored despite the pervasiveness of the language of outrage, hurt, anger, humiliation, revenge, pride, despair, nostalgia, hope, enthusiasm or love in such protests. Conversely, although the “emotional turn” (D. Gould) in social movements studies since the late 1990s has offered important correctives to the robotic picture of the protestors of the past, it has largely neglected non-Western contexts, especially the Indian sub-continent, both as a field of application and as a field of elaboration of new analyses of the mutual constitution of emotions and mobilizations.

The identification of this double research gap, the shared conviction that integrating emotions will improve our understanding of political mobilizations in South Asia, as much as focusing on this region will retool our thinking about the emotional dynamics of mobilization, led a group of scholars from France, Germany, the United States, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to embark, in 2012, into an exploratory research program on “Emotions and Political Mobilizations in the Indian Subcontinent-EMOPOLIS”, funded by Paris City's support program to fundamental research, Emergence(s). In this concluding conference of the program these researchers, coming from diverse disciplinary traditions (democratic studies, social movements analysis, sociology and history of emotions, political and religious anthropology, cultural and literature studies), will present their main findings and propositions for further inquiries on the role that emotions play in shaping different cases of political protests in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

What does it take for citizenship to be felt during public hearings? Which “sensitizing devices” (C. Traïni) help transform a millennial movement into a political mobilization? What kind of “emotion work” (A. Hochschild) is required for feminists to bring about change in legislation? Why does the historicization of communal riots have so much to gain from bringing emotions - and emotion knowledge - back in? How is the poetic language of protest historically shaped by the language of emotions? When does hurt become an attribute of collectives thus constructed as “being through feelings” (S. Ahmed)? In which conditions does the opposition between ideological opponents become a source of greater, and deadly, political despair? How can cinematic anger be mobilized in electoral politics? What is the mobilizing potential of humor and does it generate community feelings or block them? How is the “emotional commitment” (L. Mitchell) to an armed struggle altered by its life cycle? Should Jihadism be considered as an emotional experience and if so, what are the analytical and methodological implications? And finally, is social constructionism the best theoretical tool to explore what emotions do to political mobilization? These are some of the questions that the EMOPOLIS team members will address during this conference.

Employing dense and wide-ranged empirical data (first person narratives, participatory observation, archival material, poetry, movies, video-captures, etc.), the mobilizing potential of emotions in South Asia will be examined from three particular angles:
- a methodological discussion on how emotions (and which aspects of emotions) can be accessed;
- a theoretical interest in the dialectic relationship between mobilized emotions and mobilizing emotions;
- an effort to contextualize the norms and rules governing the public expression of emotions, to address the “emotionality of [various] institutional settings” (H. Flam), and to explore vernacular emotion terms.
MONDAY 8TH FEBRUARY 2016

9:15 | Welcome coffee

9:30 - 11:00 | Session 1
Opening Session

Welcome address by the CEIAS directorial board

Introduction
Amélie Blom (Sciences Po Le Havre)
Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal (CNRS-CEIAS)

Keynote addresses
Christophe Traini (IEP Aix-CERPA)
Lisa Mitchell (University of Pennsylvania)

11:00 - 12:30 | Session 2
Political Affects: Two Social Movements in Focus
Chair: Virginie Dutoya (CNRS-Centre Emile Durkheim)

Paradoxes of the Popular: Despair and Democracy in Bangladesh
Nusrat S. Chowdhury (Amherst College)

When Emotions Become Fuel: The Passage of the Anti-Sexual Harassment Legislation in Pakistan
Sadaf Ahmad (Lahore University of Management Sciences)

Discussion
Joel Cabalion (Université de Tours)

14:00 - 15:30 | Session 3
Sensitizing Devices
Chair: Amélie Blom (Sciences Po Le Havre)

It’s Effective because it’s Affective: The Dynamics and Significance of Emotions in a Delhi Public Hearing
Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal (CNRS-CEIAS)

Nostalgia and Hope: Mobilizing through the Longing for Netaji in a Contemporary Millennial Movement in West Bengal
Raphaël Voix (CNRS-CEIAS)

Discussion
Lisa Mitchell (University of Pennsylvania)

15:50 - 17:20 | Session 4
Directing Political Emotions in Spaces of Popular Culture
Chair: Julien Levesque (EHESS-CEIAS)

Mobilizing Anger in Andhra Pradesh: The Politics of the Angry Young Man and Popular Telugu Cinema
Imke Rajamani (Center for the History of Emotions-Max Planck Institute for Human Development Berlin)

Dialectic Dynamics of (De)Mobilization: Humour and Bengali wa’z mahfils
Max Stille (University of Heidelberg)

Discussion
Denis-Constant Martin (LAM, IEP Bordeaux)

TUESDAY 9TH FEBRUARY 2016

9:30 - 11:00 | Session 5
Mobilizing Emotions for Violence
Chair: Raphaël Voix (CNRS-CEIAS)

Hurt and Enthusiasm: Mobilizing for Violence in India, 1870-1920
Margrit Pernau (Center for the History of Emotions-Max Planck Institute for Human Development Berlin)

Conflicting Passions: The Civil War in Chhattisgarh
Nandini Sundar (Delhi University)

Discussion
Laurent Gayer (CNRS-CERI)

Coffee break

11:20 - 12:50 | Session 6
The Art of Protest
Chair: Caterina Guenzi (EHESS-CEIAS)

From Court to Public Sphere: How Urdu Poetry's Language of Romance Shaped the Language of Protest
Carla Petievich (University of Texas)

Hurt and Censorship in India Today: On Communities of Sentiments, Competing Vulnerabilities and Cultural Wars
Laetitia Zecchini (CNRS-THALIM)

Discussion
Denis Matringe (CNRS-CEIAS)

14:20 - 15:50 | Session 7
Theoretical and Methodological Challenges
Chair: Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal (CNRS-CEIAS)

Enlarging Classical Social Constructionism
Martin Aranguren (CNRS-URMIS Paris)

Talking Emotions with Young Activists of the 'Islamic cause' in Pakistan
Amélie Blom (Sciences Po Le Havre)

Discussion
Philippe Braud (Sciences Po Paris, Princeton University)

Coffee break

16:00 - 17:00 | Session 8
Concluding Remarks

Srirupa Roy (University of Goettingen)

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