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**Neither Reform nor Regime Change:
Labor Politics in China and India's Automobile Industries**

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Manjusha Nair and Eli Friedman *

Abstract

The automobile industry in China was shaken by an unprecedented upsurge of labor unrest in 2010, beginning with the much-discussed wildcat strike at the Nanhai Honda transmission plant in Guangdong province. While worker activism in auto plants in India was not as concentrated as in China's 2010 strike wave, the period 2009-2014 witnessed 20 strikes nationwide, indicating a significant uptick after the global recession. How might we characterize this labor-capital conflict? The 20th century labor movements resulted in *reform*, typical in northwestern Europe and North America, in which liberal democratic states incorporated labor movements into systems of industrial relations, which allowed for rationalized contention between labor and capital. When we look at the paradigmatic cases of South Korea, Brazil, and South Africa in the late 20th century, we see that politicized labor movements – and autoworkers in particular – played a key role in *regime change*. In contrast, we show that intensified labor resistance from below in China and India is translating into neither reform nor regime change. Although there is growing militancy in both places, there have been no serious challenges to the regime, and worker politics remain largely confined to individual firms. Surprisingly, and contrary to conventional wisdom, we also find that a few steps towards reform have emerged in authoritarian China, while the democratic Indian state has been more repressive towards striking autoworkers and has been enacting a series of pro-capital labor market reforms.

Keywords: China, India, labor, irregular work, protest

Neither Reform nor Regime Change: Labor Politics in China and India's Automobile Industries

The summer of 2010 saw an unprecedented upsurge of labor unrest in the automobile industry in China, beginning with the much-discussed wildcat strike at the Nanhai Honda transmission plant in Guangdong province. The workers' initial demand was simply for a large wage hike, but the list quickly expanded to include new union elections and a variety of workplace changes. Meanwhile, the Nanhai strike set off a chain reaction of unrest among autoworkers around the country as strikes erupted in supplier plants for Honda and other foreign automakers. In most cases, workers won large wage increases. And after much legislative jockeying, in 2014 the Guangdong provincial government unveiled a new set of regulations intended to encourage collective negotiations in all industries.

While worker activism in auto plants in India was not as concentrated as in China's 2010 strike wave, the period 2009-2014 witnessed 20 strikes nationwide, indicating a significant uptick after the global recession. Like their counterparts in China, the striking Indian auto workers demanded representative unions, wage hikes, job security and an end to draconian work discipline. The height of this unrest was symbolized by the wildcat strike by around 3500 workers at the Maruti-Suzuki car assembly plant in the Industrial Model Town in Haryana state in 2011. The confidence that labor gained by the partial success of many of the strikes was offset by the suppression of the unrest in Maruti-Suzuki. In an attempt to crush the workers' militancy in 2012, 147 workers were held without bail on murder charges, and 550 regular and 1800 irregular¹ workers were terminated. The right wing BJP-led governments in the state of Haryana and the center in India, in the meanwhile, began the process of instituting reforms to deregulate industrial labor.

The uptick in labor conflicts seems to be a strong confirmation of Beverly Silver's "where capital goes, conflict follows"² thesis. In her 2003 book, Silver put forward the thesis that mass production in the automobile industry has tended to recreate similar social contradictions wherever it has grown, and, as a result, strong and effective labor movements have emerged in virtually every site where Fordist mass production expanded rapidly.³ These movements were turning points in capital-labor relations, national labor movements, and democratization in the case of newly industrialized countries such as Brazil, South Korea, and South Africa. These victories were followed by similar paths of containment, "responsible" unionism and the institutionalization of

collective bargaining. Silver anticipates similar trajectories in places where the auto industry has flourished more recently.

But the question remains: how might we characterize *this* round of labor-capital conflict? 20th century labor movements created *reform*, typical in northwestern Europe and North America, in which liberal democratic states incorporated labor movements into systems of industrial relations, which allowed for rationalized contention between labor and capital. In the political sphere, political parties representing working class interests fought for various decommodifying measures embodied in the welfare state.⁴ Without discounting huge internal variation, the reform path implied a democratic negotiation of class compromise.

Labor movements in the newly industrialized countries of the late 20th century showed a different political trajectory of *regime change*. When we look at the paradigmatic cases of South Korea, Brazil, and South Africa, we see that politicized labor movements – and autoworkers in particular – played a key role in anti-apartheid and democratization movements.⁵ Authoritarian regimes in these late developing former colonies refused to politically incorporate emergent working classes, one consequence of which was the politicization of what might otherwise have remained largely economic struggles.⁶ In part due to expanded worker radicalism, authoritarian regimes in each of these countries met their demise in the 1980s and 90s.⁷

Drawing on this historical experience, we might reasonably expect a strong labor movement challenging state power in authoritarian China, while the democratic Indian state should be relatively supple in adopting reforms in response to labor agitation. But despite very different conditions in China and India, we show that intensified labor resistance from below is translating into neither reform nor regime change. Although there is growing militancy in both places, there have been no serious challenges to the regime, and worker politics remain largely confined to individual firms. Surprisingly, we also find that a few steps towards reform have emerged in authoritarian China, while the democratic Indian state has been more repressive towards striking autoworkers and has been enacting a series of pro-capital labor market reforms in the industrial sector. As we will show, in the absence of the right to strike or freedom of association, the Chinese government's efforts to stem the tide of labor conflict fall well short of the kinds of class compromise we saw in the West during the 20th century.

Thus, while auto workers in China and India continue the long tradition of militancy during the phase of rapid capitalist expansion, these struggles are not laying the groundwork for broad transformation of the system of industrial relations (reform) or the political realm more broadly (regime change). Although the two countries have followed very different trajectories, decentralization and growth-oriented local governments have resulted in an incredibly hostile political terrain for labor. What's more, 20th century institutions of labor representation have not re-established autonomous political power for an internally segmented working class increasingly composed of migrants and irregular workers. Finally, with the complicated legacy of socialism, the end of the cycle of national liberation movements, and no further "waves" of democratization on the horizon,⁸ resistance has remained almost exclusively concerned with workplace-based issues, and anti-state politics are off the table. Workers are militant and can win some concessions from capital – but compromise remains confined to the level of the firm, and 20th century style class compromise remains elusive. We suggest that worker unrest in both China and India can be characterized as "fractured militancy."⁹ By this we refer to the presence of a multitude of actors engaged in regular, confrontational forms of protest at the point of production, without the emergence of a trans-local collective movement with common objectives. Fractured militancy in China and India is economically disruptive, but autoworkers in today's global South are no longer in a position to lead movements for reform or regime change.

China and India are ideal cases for assessing labor politics in the 21st century. Combined, they constitute 20 percent of the world economy, and they hold one third of the world's population. In China, market reforms were introduced in 1979 and in India in 1991, though informal marketization processes in the latter were ongoing since the 1980s. And the auto industry has been growing rapidly in both places: whereas in 2000, China and India were, respectively, the 14th and 15th largest producers of autos worldwide, by 2014 they had leapt to 1st and 6th. During this same period of time, total auto production increased six fold in India and a jaw-dropping thirty-three fold in China.¹⁰ Finally, while we anticipate some similar dynamics in other rapidly developing countries in the South, China and India are in and of themselves of great political and scholarly import.

We provide a multi-level analysis based on dynamics in the firm, industry, and the state in each country. We begin by looking at two strikes, the Nanhai Honda strike in Guangdong province's Pearl River Delta and the Maruti-Suzuki strike in Gurgaon district in Haryana state. These strikes

will then be situated in the broader contexts of insurgency in the automobile sector in those manufacturing hubs. We then assess the outcomes both for the individual strikes and the industry more broadly, drawing on evidence from a variety of other firms. Throughout, we are attentive to the response of the state, both in the immediate strike resolution as well as the broader legal environment. While we do not claim that the reforms we analyze are directly caused by the individual strikes, these legal changes provide important context within which we can situate the strikes. Evidence has primarily been generated by field observations in Guangdong and Gurgaon and interviews with autoworkers, rank and file union members, and trade union leaders. We also rely on news reports, official documents, and secondary literature.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows: In the next section, we discuss the literature on labor politics and outline the two general trajectories of reform and regime change. Then we provide empirical evidence from China and India. We follow that with an analysis of the convergences and divergences between China and India, and provide a tentative explanation for the emergence of fractured militancy. The concluding section reiterates the findings and suggests broader implications for labor politics in the global South.

Reform *versus* Regime Change

Analyzing the spatial and temporal patterns of capital mobility and labor movements world-historically, Beverly Silver has pointed out that wherever capital in the automobile industry relocated, strong working class movements emerged. Specifically, mass production in the automobile industry recreated similar social contradictions in all geographical locations where they spread, which have resulted in strong and effective labor movements.¹¹ Automobile sector militancy shifted from North America in the 1930s and 1940s to Europe in the postwar period and then to newly industrializing countries such as Brazil, South Africa and South Korea in the 1970s. What's more, Silver found important similarities across these heterogeneous cultural and political settings.¹² The participants were often first and second generation migrants and they built robust community support. Relying on strong workplace bargaining power,¹³ i.e. the ability to stop the entire production process by halting production at one site, autoworkers were able to inflict major losses on capital by withdrawing their labor. With the immense strength generated by their position in the division of labor, these workers were able to shape and expand the boundaries of unionism.

Thus, militant autoworkers have played a decisive political role in reshaping broader labor-capital relations in each new site of capitalist expansion.

While class conflict has emerged everywhere, the dynamics of labor politics have varied significantly across time and space. In the early industrializing countries of northwestern Europe and North America, the period of *laissez faire* capitalist development resulted in intense class conflict and revolutionary social movements. Beginning in the inter-war period, these democratic states began the process of reform to decommodify and politically incorporate labor. The specific class alignments, political alliances, levels of economic development, and legal and institutional frameworks varied greatly, and it is beyond the scope of this paper to explain this variation.¹⁴ But while there are certainly many “varieties” of capitalism even within the North,¹⁵ a few characteristics were common to the labor politics of reform.

The first is to note that this process culminated in *class compromise*, in which labor agreed to not challenge private ownership of the means of production or capital’s prerogative to organize production in exchange for job security and better compensation.¹⁶ As Eric Olin Wright has argued, such a compromise may be materially beneficial to both labor and capital,¹⁷ but it certainly implies the maintenance of capitalism as an economic and social system.¹⁸ Legally recognized unions represent workers in negotiations with capital, and strikes are granted legal protection to ensure that labor maintains at least a degree of coercive power vis-à-vis employers. In places with a more robust form of compromise, centralized systems of industrial relations allow for wages to be largely taken out of competition.

While somewhat beyond the scope of our inquiry, class compromise in the North also implied the construction of new institutions to decommodify labor outside of the workplace. Once again, there is great diversity in the character of welfare states, but in general we witnessed national governments directly granting social citizenship in the form of providing or subsidizing health care, education, pensions, and unemployment insurance.¹⁹ While labor’s role in the construction of the welfare state was uneven, in general unions have been the most consistent advocates for taking the provision of basic human needs out of the market.

Finally – and this is decisive for all features of reform – class compromise implied that the state took a *relatively* neutral position in adjudicating conflicts between labor and capital. This neutrality is relative in that a compromise within capitalism inevitably produces systemic bias in

capital's favor. While operating under the assumption that private property is sacrosanct, the state should act as a relatively neutral arbiter in labor conflicts. Courts and police enforce laws in a disinterested manner, even those that may go against the interests of the employer. In the electoral arena, parties representing the interests of labor are allowed to freely compete. And pro-labor organizations of various stripes are granted strong legal protections in civil society.

When we turn our attention from Europe and North America to the global South, we see that conditions of late development and post-colonialism resulted in some significant differences. While acknowledging huge diversity even within the mid-late 20th century South, we will restrict our focus to the three paradigmatic cases of South Africa, South Korea, and Brazil.²⁰ Frequently interpreted as “social movement unionism,”²¹ workers in each of these three countries built bonds of solidarity with community members and other groups, while formulating a set of political demands that extended beyond the workplace. Gay Seidman has shown how political exclusion under authoritarian governments in South Africa and Brazil generated highly politicized labor movements, and Hagen Koo and Yoonkyung Lee have demonstrated the emergence of similar patterns in South Korea.²² What's more, it is clear that the social movement-like character of labor politics in these countries was very much connected to their position in the South. All three countries experienced late but rapid industrialization in the 1970s under US-supported authoritarian governments.²³ Worker grievances were articulated in an environment in which the metanarratives of anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, and socialism still held mass appeal.

And in all three cases, labor movements played a crucial role in ending the regime and bringing about democratization. In Brazil, unions were significant in bringing about the change from a military to civilian regime in 1985, and persisted as a force in challenging the state and opposing neoliberal reforms.²⁴ South Africa's transition to democracy in 1994 was built in part on worker struggles,²⁵ and has created a working population with a strong democratic political consciousness. After the decline of the auto sectors in Brazil and South Africa, a wave of labor unrest in South Korea in 1987 led to wage hikes and establishment of democratic unions, and contributed to the successful movement for democratization.²⁶

Certainly an orientation to regime change does not necessitate its realization. Major segments of the labor movement in 19th and early 20th century Europe pursued revolutionary socialism, communism, and anarchism, but nonetheless ended up with class compromise. And

indeed, labor may realize a more robust version of reform if there is a strong “radical flank effect.”²⁷ But it is clear that states in the global North were able to contain worker militancy during the period of rapid industrial expansion.

We are thus cognizant of the fact that historical sequencing is of the utmost importance, and that the relatively constrained timeframe we are dealing with in our cases (five years) may be insufficient to adequately assess the dynamics at play. Political trajectories may only become apparent over the long term. Nevertheless, we anticipate that we should be able to identify certain foundational elements that would at least suggest future possibilities.

Based on the experiences of 20th century militant labor movements that resulted in reform or regime change, how might we characterize 21st century unrest in the automobile industry? Can we observe the seeds of regime change in authoritarian China or pro-labor reform in India? Evidence points to the contrary. Despite the almost absolute political exclusion of labor, we see the state in China taking tentative steps to reform institutions and expand social protections. These steps fall well short of class compromise, at least as it existed in the North in the mid-20th century. But it stands in contrast to the situation in India, in which democratically elected governments at the central and state levels are enacting pro-capital labor reforms.

Regime change-oriented politics appear in neither place. Were Chinese workers to demand democracy, they would incur the immediate wrath of a fearsome repressive apparatus. “Socialism” is weighted down with enormous historical baggage in both places, though clearly to a greater extent in China. Activists in India may employ revolutionary language, and this rhetorical feature differentiates it from China. Radical left organizations have gathered at various industrial sites, but there is nothing resembling a revolutionary workers’ collective in sight to back up their rhetoric. Although India is plagued with entrenched social hierarchy and exclusion, calls for “democratization” or “radical change” have not resonated among most workers. Neither economic nor political goals have scaled up beyond the firm. Despite a major upsurge in worker activism, demands in both countries remain largely confined in scope. By almost any definition, labor politics in China and India cannot be characterized as *social movements*,²⁸ to say nothing of an anti-state movement. This is not to imply that these struggles are *apolitical*, but merely that politics are limited in duration and socio-spatial scope.

In the following empirical sections, we will see that workers are indeed engaged in frequent acts of resistance against exploitation in the workplace, just as Silver would predict. But when we move to look at the outcomes of these struggles at both the industrial and national levels, we see that Chinese and Indian workers and the Chinese and Indian states are departing in important ways from their historical predecessors.

Labor Insurgency in China

The auto industry in China has grown spectacularly over the past generation. Foreign companies wishing to produce in China have been required to establish joint-venture assembly plants with local state-owned firms – a necessary step to cash in on the explosive growth in the domestic auto market. A number of auto clusters have developed in the country, including around Guangzhou, Shanghai, Wuhan, Chongqing, and Changchun. Parts suppliers are a diverse mix of mostly foreign firms. In general, wages and benefits are strong in the assembly plants (reflecting their tradition as state-owned firms), although there has been increasing use of irregular migrant workers. Labor unrest has been concentrated in the supplier factories, where the largely migrant workforce has demanded compensation on par with their counterparts in the assembly plants.

The 2010 Nanhai Honda strike has received ample treatment in the scholarly literature,²⁹ so we will not provide a comprehensive account of the events. Nonetheless, a brief review of that summer's labor unrest is necessary. Most of our attention, however, will be devoted to assessing the outcomes of what was hailed at the time as a turning point in Chinese labor relations.

On May 17, 2010, the assembly line at the Nanhai Honda transmission plant came to a halt. A small group of workers, dissatisfied with wages that were far below those of the joint-venture assembly plant, had planned the wildcat strike in advance. And although most of the nearly 2,000 workers in the plant had not been involved in strike preparation, the demand for an 800 RMB wage hike (just under 50% for most workers) was widely embraced, and the strike spread to the factory's other workshops. Both the regular and irregular workers were active participants in the strike. Over the course of the next three weeks and several rounds of negotiations, the Nanhai Honda workers were able to sustain what was at the time almost certainly the longest running strike in a private firm. Dissatisfied with the fact that the enterprise-level union was largely siding with management during the negotiations, workers additionally demanded to "re-organize" the union, meaning that

they would hold new union elections. With the direct involvement of the Guangdong Federation of Trade Unions (GDFTU), worker representatives accepted a wage hike of approximately 500 RMB for regular workers and somewhat higher than that for irregular workers. The GDFTU leadership also promised to preside over new union elections.

Even before the Nanhai negotiations were over, a strike wave engulfed much of the auto industry (see Table 1). Although things remained calm in the joint-venture assembly plants, workers in auto parts producers around the country walked off the job demanding large wage increases. In many cases, they followed the lead of the Nanhai workers and demanded new union elections. Often with the support of the government, most of the striking workers won major wage hikes. The strikes even spread beyond the auto sector, and some enterprises gave workers a preemptive raise. In Guangzhou alone, there were strikes in more than 60 enterprises, many of them outside of the auto sector.³⁰ Although it is impossible to know the precise number of strikes that took place in Guangdong during the summer of 2010, it is clear that the government was concerned about the instability and was willing to push employers to compromise to resolve strikes.

Table 1: Auto industry strikes in China, 2009-2011 (non-exhaustive)

Firm name	Place	Date
Changan Ford Mazda Automobile Co., Ltd	Nanjing	March-09
Guangzhou H Auto Parts Industries Inc.	Guangzhou*	June-09
Wuhan Auto Parts Alliance Co., Ltd.	Wuhan	June-09
Wuhan Wanshun Auto Parts Co., Ltd.	Wuhan	July-09
Guangzhou Morioku Technology Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	July-09
F.tech Zhongshan Inc.	Zhongshan*	January-10
Gensho Shibusawa Logistics (Guangzhou) Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	January-10
Akebono Corporation (Guangzhou)	Guangzhou*	January-10
China FCC Foshan Co., Ltd.	Foshan	February-10
Yurozu Bao Automative Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	February-10
Guangzhou Linjun Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	March-10
Guangzhou Automobile Industry Group (GAIG)	Guangzhou*	March-10
Guangzhou Xing Guang Metal Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	March-10
Guangzhou Hexi Auto Parts	Guangzhou*	March-10
Qijiang Gear Transmission Co., Ltd.	Chongqing	May-10
Honda Auto Parts Manufacturing (CHAM) Co., Ltd.	Nanhai*	May-10
FUJI Chemical Co., Ltd.	Zhongshan*	June-10
Toyoda Gosei Co., Ltd.	Tianjin	June-10
Nihon Plastic Co.	Zhongshan*	June-10
Wuhan Auto Parts Alliance Co., Ltd.	Wuhan	June-10

Toyoda Gosei Starlight Rubber and Plastic Co., Ltd.	Tianjin	June-10
Honda Lock (Guangdong) Co., Ltd.	Zhongshan*	June-10
Foshan Fengfu Autoparts Co., Ltd.	Foshan*	June-10
Omron (Guangzhou) Automotive Electronics Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	July-10
Atsumi Metal Co., Ltd.	Foshan*	July-10
Guangzhou Ahresty Casting Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	April-11
Sanqiao (Guizhou) Auto Parts	Guizhou	April-11
Kumho Tire (Changchun) Co., Ltd.	Changchun	June-11
NHK-UNI Spring (Guangzhou) Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	June-11
Denso (Guangzhou Nansha) Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	June-11
Guangzhou Ahresty Casting Co., Ltd.	Guangzhou*	December-11
Shanghai Delphi Automotive Air Conditioning Co., Ltd.	Shanghai	December-11

* indicates city within Guangdong Province

Sources: China Labour Bulletin Strike Map,
<http://www.ihlo.org/LRC/W/000710.pdf>

Big wage hikes helped ameliorate the immediate crisis, but certain segments of the state recognized that there was a systemic problem with labor relations. Indeed, while Nanhai had captured the headlines, there had been growing unrest in the auto industry for some time leading up to 2010. And strikes had been increasing not just in auto, but in other industries as well, particularly in Guangdong.³¹ In a major departure from the past, sympathetic officials in Guangdong and Beijing began openly discussing legislating the right to strike.³² The Guangdong provincial government proposed a set of regulations on “Democratic Enterprise Management” which had originally been raised in 2008, but were subsequently shelved as a result of the economic crisis. The regulations would allow for collective negotiations if 1/5 of employees demanded it. While we cannot claim a directly causal relationship between the strike wave and the new regulatory effort, provincial union leaders publically cited the case of Nanhai in arguing for the new regulations.³³ It appeared as if a significant realignment in labor relations was afoot.

With more than five years since the strike wave, we are now in a better position to fully assess what has changed and what has stayed the same. The proposed regulations from 2010 were defeated by vociferous opposition from employer organizations, most notably the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce. But in 2014 the Guangdong government enacted the “Regulations on Enterprise Collective Contracts,” which contained many of the elements of the original in somewhat revised form. The centerpiece of the regulations was a requirement that enterprises engage in collective negotiations if more than 50% of employees demand it. There were additional

provisions to protect bargaining representatives from reprisal, guidelines (though no requirements) for democratic representative elections, and specific timeframes within which management would be required to respond to a request for negotiations.

While this seemed like a decisive step towards implementing the kind of industrial relations framework that we would expect based on the experience of countries in the North, in fact the regulations fell short in a number of key areas. Most worrying from the perspective of workers was that the regulations explicitly banned strikes while negotiations are taking place. Since the right to strike was removed from the constitution in 1982, Chinese law had made no mention one way or the other of strikes. This new ban seemed particularly problematic given that there were no requirements for bargaining in good faith or binding arbitration. The consequence was that management was given the option to “bargain” indefinitely without making any concessions, thereby rendering any strike activity illegal. Notably, there are still no legally protected strikes anywhere in the country.

And there is still the always-vexing issue of union representation. Following the Nanhai strike, the GDFTU promised to directly supervise new elections. But it became clear quite quickly that the elections were going to be very tightly managed to ensure that activists would be excluded from union leadership. Rank and file workers were unable to freely participate in electing the union president and executive committee, as incumbents tightly controlled all nominations for higher-level union officers.³⁴ Evidence on post-strike elections in other plants is limited, but there is every reason to believe that Nanhai Honda would have the *best* possible outcome, given that it was subjected to such high levels of scrutiny. A union-produced booklet on successful cases of collective negotiations in Guangzhou from 2010-11 indicates that elections in other factories were similarly restrictive. For instance, in recounting the success of negotiations at the NTN auto parts factory, the booklet said, “representatives must meet the following conditions: A) rationality, objectivity, familiarity with the company’s development; B) ability to represent their department; C) selected representatives must possess certain levels of professional ability.”³⁵ Such conditions would appear to exclude unskilled workers and activists. And legally, there has been no change whatsoever to encourage greater independence for unions. As has been widely noted in the literature, Chinese workers almost without exception do not see their unions as legitimate representatives,³⁶ a situation that has been little changed by the 2010 strike wave.

Although the state has kept a tight grip on unions, it does appear as if the high level of strike activity in Guangdong's auto sector has led to a degree of regularization of firm-level bargaining. The union chair from Denso, a Japanese-owned factory that experienced a well-organized and militant strike in 2010 commented on this development:

RA: [after the 2010 strike wave] the negotiations had a real effect on wages?

Union chair: Yes. For example, the boss would offer 500. We'd counteroffer and end up with 100 more. Each time we'd get some kind of gain....

I think that the 2010 strike wave had a huge effect on subsequent wage increases... if this factory has a strike, it can give society a point of reference. It's a warning to capital."³⁷

In describing the process of negotiations one year after the strike, the union chair at Guangzhou Shiroki detailed the sort of back and forth that is typical of collective bargaining in other countries. After the union proposed a 100 yuan wage hike, management countered with an offer of a 20 RMB bonus. In the end, the union settled for a 50 yuan bonus, with the chair commenting, "both labor and capital made some compromises."³⁸

How long management will remain willing to bargain in good faith in the absence of a real union or the right to strike is debatable. Indeed, two years after the above interview, the very same union chair from Shiroki found himself up against an intransigent bargaining opponent. Beginning in March 2015, eight separate meetings took place between representatives from the union and management. After an initial offer of an 8.5% wage increase, management made a symbolic concession and insisted that 8.7% was their final offer. After two and a half months and eight rounds of negotiations, the union chair said that he would put the 8.7% wage hike to a vote, as was his right. But management refused to make the arrangements for workers to attend the meeting where they would vote on the proposal, unless the negotiating team gave the proposal their support. As the worker representatives were unwilling to do this, management unilaterally imposed a contract on June 9.³⁹ As opposed to the relatively militant union at Shiroki, the union at Nanhai never escaped the grip of management. And in 2013 a group of workers led a strike to protest the contract that their largely unaccountable representatives had accepted.⁴⁰ It seems likely that ongoing wildcat action will be necessary to force management to take negotiations seriously.

Even before the strike wave, union leadership in Guangdong had expressed interest in building “sectoral unions,” i.e. unions which negotiate collective agreements for all of the employers in a given industry and region. Since 2010, there are increased indications of informal coordination between auto parts suppliers in the Pearl River Delta. A union chair at the Denso plant in Guangzhou’s Nansha district described how he and union representatives from other neighboring plants would get together occasionally to discuss conditions in their workplaces. But they had not managed to set up a formal organization, leaving labor at a disadvantage: “In the sector there aren’t any good organizations... the sectoral organizations belong to capital. For example, the auto industry associations... the union is a member, but it is really weak.”⁴¹ In Luogang District of Guangzhou, the municipal union federation established the Luogang District Auto Parts Union Association in 2011, with the intent of experimenting with district-wide collective negotiations. As of the end of 2013, this had not yet happened, but union leaders were in regular contact with each other. Union officials from the municipal and provincial level, as well as scholars from Sun Yat-sen University had played an important role in bringing people together. But practically speaking, collective negotiations in the auto industry remained decentralized at the firm level, and any form of coordination was informal in nature.⁴²

Finally, the central government revised regulations governing use of “dispatch labor” (a form of irregular labor based on labor-subcontracting) in 2014. In China, use of irregular workers has grown tremendously in recent years, and the new regulations restricted dispatch labor to 10% of the total workforce. This was by no means a direct response to the auto strikes, as dispatch labor had become widespread in a huge number of industries, including the state-owned sector. Particularly given the slowing economy, there are many reasons to believe that these regulations will not be strictly enforced. And yet, it serves as another indicator that both the Guangdong and central governments are concerned about growing labor unrest and are, in general, moving towards greater regulation of the labor market. That being said, these regulatory and legislative shifts remain poorly enforced as workers are fully excluded politically and are atomized in the workplace. If anything, China under Xi Jinping has become more hostile to worker voice.

Labor Insurgency in India

India is the sixth biggest manufacturer of commercial and passenger cars, and the second biggest automobile market, after China. In 2009, India overtook China in the export of passenger

automobiles.⁴³ All major automobile multinationals have investment in India at present, in numerous single and joint ventures in auto component manufacturing and assembly.⁴⁴ Unlike in China, there are no public-private joint ventures. The supply networks and labor regimes in all the three automobile production centers are typical of the auto industry in the global South: Most suppliers are Indian and foreign joint ventures, or local suppliers with licenses to produce the same body part as a transnational supplier.⁴⁵ Production in the upper tiers of the supply chain are accomplished by a high degree of automation, and a mix of regular and irregular male workers. In contrast to China, the lower tiers of the supply chain depend heavily on women and children's labor in home-based workshops.⁴⁶

With the exception of one electronic component manufacturing firm, all workers that we interviewed in Gurgaon were male. All workers were young, articulate and toyed with their iPhone or Androids during the meetings. They were graduates of vocational technical schools, and their children, even those of temporary workers, attended private English medium schools. In other words, these workers, first generation migrants from rural India, held aspirations of social mobility in the city.

While the Maruti-Manesar strike has received widespread media and scholarly focus,⁴⁷ labor unrest has been common for many years in the automobile sector in India, which was fully privatized in 2007. Gurgaon in Haryana state, where the Maruti plant is located, constitutes one of the three automobile hubs in India, the others being near Chennai in the south and Pune in the west. Table 2 presents a non-exhaustive list of recent labor protests in the automobile industry in India, and it is evident that protests have taken place consistently over the years in all automobile hubs and across the supply chain.⁴⁸ We restrict our analysis to dynamics within Gurgaon, though we draw on interviews with central union organizers, news reports and writings on labor unrest in the other automobile clusters.

Table 2: Auto industry Strikes India, 2009-2016 (non exhaustive)

Firm	Location, State	Date
Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd.	Nashik, Maharashtra	May-09 and March-10
Sunbeam Auto Pvt. Ltd.	Gurgaon, Haryana*	May-09
Bosch Chassis Systems India Ltd.	Pune, Maharashtra	July-09

Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India Pvt. Ltd.	Manesar, Haryana*	August-09
Rico Auto Industries	Gurgaon, Haryana*	August-09
Pricol Ltd.	Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu	September 2009
Volvo India Pvt. Ltd.	Hoskote, Karnataka	August-10
MRF Tyres Ltd.	Chennai, Tamil Nadu	October-10 and June-11
General Motors India Pvt. Ltd.	Halol, Gujarat	March-11
Maruti-Suzuki India Ltd.	Manesar, Haryana*	June-August-11
Bosch in India Ltd.	Bangalore, Karnataka	September-11
Dunlop Tyres Ltd.	Hooghly, Bengal	October-11
Caparo Vehicle Products India Ltd.	Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu	December-11
Hyundai Motor India Ltd.	Chennai, Tamil Nadu	April and December-11
Dunlop Tyres Ltd.	Ambattur, Tamil Nadu	February-12
Maruti-Suzuki India Ltd.	Manesar, Haryana*	July-12
Bajaj Auto Ltd.	Pune, Maharashtra	June -13
Bosch in India Ltd.	Bangalore, Karnataka	November-13
Napino Auto and Electronics Ltd.	Gurgaon, Haryana*	March-14
Shriram Pistons and Rings Ltd.	Alwar, Rajasthan	April-14
ASTI Electronics India Pvt. Ltd.	Manesar, Haryana*	December-14
Bridgestone Tyres India Ltd.	Manesar, Haryana*	September-15
Maruti-Suzuki India Ltd.	Manesar, Haryana*	November-15
Tata Motors Ltd.	Sanand, Gujarat	February-16

*Indicates town within Gurgaon district in Haryana

Source: compiled based on news reports and fieldwork.

In Gurgaon, in the six final assembly plants and six tier 1 supplier firms in which interviews were conducted, numerous protests transpired between 2005 and 2014 in which regular and irregular workers struck to demand representative unions. Enterprise unions are the norm in the automobile sector, but unions could be independent or affiliated with central trade unions. Most enterprises had yellow unions masquerading as independent unions. Protesting workers were able to persuade the management to recognize the new union and negotiate new wage settlements; however a few workers were invariably suspended or terminated. Irregular workers were largely refused wage rises or job security. Almost three-fourth of the workers in the firms studied were irregular workers, but the unions formed by regular workers were not legally bound to represent the interests of the former.

The Honda workers' strike in 2005 was the first to gain widespread media attention, when around 1500 regular workers and 3000 irregular workers registered their own All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)-affiliated union, against the wishes of the management-sponsored union. This

was followed by mass suspension and termination of workers. After a police assault on a rally of Honda workers at the District Labor Commissioner's office, attempts made by the Congress Party-led central government resolved the conflict. In the end, the suspended and terminated workers were taken back, workers received a tremendous wage hike and other provisions. In another instance of a moderate success, 600 workers in a component supply firm, Munjal Showa, struck in September 2011, protesting against being retained as trainees after four to five years of employment. The firm was forced to stop production and eventually the management came to a tripartite agreement (mediated by a state-appointed Labor Commissioner), after which around 250 workers were made regular, a wage hike was provided, and a work committee – but not a union – was allowed.

In the case of the Maruti-Suzuki plant in Manesar,⁴⁹ labor unrest was met with drastic steps from the management. This plant epitomized lean production, where 48 cars were produced in one minute. Workers' obedience was secured in this plant through stringent discipline that reflected a more developed despotic Fordist factory regime of the early 1900s in the USA than the participatory management that lean production envisaged: When the car rolled in the assembly line to their work station, the worker had to choose between the 180 variants of the three cars produced at the plant and match the part to the car in an average of 50 seconds per car.⁵⁰ There were no relievers at work, and workers had extremely short breaks. During their tea break of seven and a half minutes they had to run to the rest area that was 100 meters away, use the washroom, have tea and snacks and return to the workstation. The uptick in demand after the global recession in 2008 forced the automakers to stretch their existing capacities. In early-2010, coming out of the slowdown in car sales in 2008 and 2009, Maruti experienced a sudden jump in demand, a 30% rise year-on-year in bookings. Its Manesar plant, with an installed capacity of 250,000 cars a year then, started making 350,000 cars. To ensure workers' participation, their incentives were aligned to production. But life on the shop floor took a turn for the worse. While production at its Gurgaon facility rose by 17%, Manesar was pushed harder, with a 40% jump. This jump in production had its effect along the supply chain where the workers faced the ultimate burden of it. We will argue that this intensification and coercion in labour resulted in the unrest.⁵¹ There was no working union in the firm. Most employees were under the age of 24 when they joined and were designated as "trainees." The trainees became regular in 2009, and in 2011, they decided to register their union, Maruti Suzuki Workers' Union, in the Haryana state capital of Chandigarh. Legally, union registration is done discretely without informing the management; in this case, the workers believed that

management received a fax from the registrar's office with the news of the union formation. Shortly thereafter, to forestall the formation of a union, management suspended a handful of workers citing "indiscipline," and started taking workers' signatures on blank papers, intended to create fear among the remaining workers.

But workers were uncowed, refusing to sign the blank paper and then launching a strike in June 2011. Around 3500 workers participated in the strike, and the majority were irregular workers who had similar skills as regular workers and did the same jobs. But in general they were paid just the minimum wage for a skilled worker in Haryana state, while regular workers were paid four to five times higher. These irregular workers supported the regular workers' attempts to form a union, despite the fact that they could not be legally represented by the union. After thirteen days on strike, management agreed to the formation of the union and reinstatement of the suspended workers. But the agreement was not honored and instead the management asked workers to sign a "good conduct undertaking" that restricted them from work stoppage or any activity hampering production. In response to this, workers launched a second strike. The management suspended ninety five workers. Eventually the management agreed to the registering of the union, but insisted that this union was only meant for regular workers and refused to reinstate the forty five irregular workers. They then struck yet a third time to reinstate the suspended workers and for wage parity for irregular workers. But management bribed thirty leaders, and the strike was broken.

Then, in July 2012 a dispute between a worker and his supervisor blew up into a heated argument. Violence erupted, and a human resource manager of the firm was asphyxiated to death in a fire of ambiguous origin. After this incident, 550 regular workers and 1800 irregular workers were expelled from the company. In an unprecedented act of defiance of the democratic rights of workers, 147 workers were arrested on charges of murder, arson and rioting and their bail plea was rejected by the Haryana High Court. They were held without bail or conviction for over two years, and 34 are still in jail as of 2016. Meanwhile, a union election was held in the firm in 2014 and the workers' candidates won eleven out of the twelve seats with 85 percent of the total votes. The union has subsequently negotiated agreements on wage, workload, leave and bonuses for regular workers.⁵² Irregular workers were excluded from these agreements and they struck once more in September 2015 against the new wage agreement that increased their wage gap with regular workers. They

believed that this new agreement between the union and the Maruti-Suzuki management jeopardized the possibility of any future joint action by regular and irregular workers.⁵³

Among the workers' protests we examined, affiliation with a central trade union seemed to provide striking workers with some external support. The Honda plant had an AITUC affiliated union, as did Munjal Showa and Napino auto, two Indian and Japanese joint ventures supplying components to Honda and Maruti-Suzuki. The workers survived on food packages thrown inside by their fellow unionists from outside. Once the settlement was reached with the management however, the workers seemed content with their bargain. The union president pointed out, "Now we have 12 body members. Some keep a watch on the production line as well, because we care about production. We became company workers. We got service security and we get salary increase every three years."

Many workers preferred independent unions that were confined to their firms to trade union-affiliated unions. As the union president from a tier 1 firm put it,

"My union activity is confined to my plant. I do not want to interfere in outside activities. I do meet everyone and support everyone, I maintain good relations with all unions. But independent union, means no tension, just our owner and us. We don't want any other problem. We want the plant to run." ⁵⁴

The two assembly plants of Maruti-Suzuki had two distinct independent unions with separate jurisdictions. Apart from these, Maruti-Suzuki had an engine plant, which was located inside the Manesar assembly plant and a Suzuki motorcycles plant, both of which had unions affiliated with a central trade union. The motorcycle plant workers complained that their attempts to have a combined bargaining body for all four plants were only partially successful, though they formed a joint organization (Maruti Mazdoor Sangh) that had a perfunctory role. They claimed that the CEO of Suzuki Corporation, whom everyone referred to as Suzuki-san, was in favor of such an organization. Such solidarity was not forthcoming among the workers of the four plants however.

Evidence from other major auto workers' strikes in India shows that workers' bargaining power through strike was curbed in other automobile hubs. Workers in Hyundai Motor Company near Chennai struck in 2012 demanding union representation and the reinstatement of twenty workers suspended by the management for forming a union. The strike was called off after fifteen days; while the management assented to take back the suspended workers, workers had to report to

work with no back wages, and their union was not recognized, nor were their demands on relaxing the factory environment granted.⁵⁵ Workers of Bajaj auto plant struck in 2013 against stringent work discipline and suspension of twenty one workers. In an unprecedented move, they demanded equity shares in the Indian-owned company. The management refused to negotiate with the workers, terming their demands “insane” and the strike was unconditionally called off after fifty five days.⁵⁶

Since the coming to power of the National Democratic Alliance in 2014, the culturally right wing and economically pro-business BJP has been pursuing pro-capital labor market reforms both at the Center and in Haryana state.⁵⁷ Labor regulations are in the concurrent list in the federal system, where the central state and the regional states both have legislative powers, and the regional state governments can amend the central laws. Pro-capital amendments to existing labor laws first appeared in the BJP-led state of Rajasthan,⁵⁸ and were then promoted by the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance at the center. Reforms are expected in more regional states in 2016. Haryana has already decided to follow in the footsteps of Rajasthan, and is deliberating changes to a number of laws including the Contract Labour Act that places restrictions on the employment of irregular workers on a subcontracting basis. Another amendment that would affect workers' organizing capacity is the new regulation which raises the number of workers' signatures necessary to register a union to 30 percent of total workers instead of the previous 10 percent. Other amendments included changing the laws regulating the contract labor to exempt companies employing fewer than 50 workers (the earlier limit was 20), increasing the limit of overtime for workers from 50 hours per quarter to 100 hours per quarter, and lifting relaxations on night shifts by women in factories. Trade unions have held a joint national strike against these labor law reforms, but have not been effective in derailing them.⁵⁹

Fractured Militancy in China and India

How might we account for labor politics in marketizing China and India that differ significantly from their 20th century counterparts? Despite growing militancy, worker unrest remains largely depoliticized and confined to the enterprise level. We suggest that declining national control over the economy, the rise of segmented employment arrangements, and the decline of powerful unions armed with the meta-narratives of anti-imperialism and socialism have been decisive.

Although the two countries followed very different economic and political trajectories since the 1950s, liberalization and increased capital mobility have ushered in an incredibly hostile political terrain for labor over the past generation. A significant force in this regard has been economic decentralization and the role of subnational states in encouraging and competing for attracting capital and promoting growth.⁶⁰ The provinces in China and the regional states in India assume a ‘catalytic role’ in the expansion of multinational corporations,⁶¹ leading to closer and often clandestine associations between state and capital, although the specific forms vary from province to province and region to region.⁶² Haryana and Guangdong are representative of this trend, with both places establishing SEZs and pursuing employer-friendly policies over the past generation.⁶³ As in many other places in the world, state-capital collusion is ascendent, marking a dramatic departure from socialist and nationalist legacies. While state hostility to labor is by no means a 21st century invention, the asymmetry in spatial mobility between capital and labor has widened, much to the advantage of the former. In our cases, this reality limits states’ willingness to make significant pro-labor reforms. Foreign investors have been a powerful political force in both places, obstructing or watering down labor protections in China while consistently pushing for labor market liberalization in India.

Yet another departure from 20th century labor politics in the automobile industry is the specific impact of Japanese-innovated employment segmentation introduced in the 1990s. Lean production demands intense production flow that elicits quick responses from labor and hence is predicated on full compliance by workers.⁶⁴ This compliance is ensured to a certain extent by segmentation in the labor market, comprised of vertical segmentation within the firms, and horizontal segregation across the supplier firms. This has resulted in a core labor force rewarded with skill development, job security, and wage rises. But this core coexists with a peripheral labor force without job security, skill development, high wages, or substantial benefits.

In China and India, the emergence of segmentation in the automobile sector has been well documented, and has had a profound impact on the nature of labor unrest.⁶⁵ While segmentation has certainly not prevented worker protest altogether,⁶⁶ it has played a significant role in undermining intra- and inter-firm solidarity. In India, as clearly shown above, labor dualism has had a strong impact on the ability of workers to organize successfully. This segmentation of the workforce was

not a feature of employment relations in the paradigmatic 20th century cases, and presents workers with new challenges in organizing politically.

Unlike for twentieth century working classes, the new organizations of these young workers do not have the cultural frameworks of anti-imperialism or socialism at their disposal, nor can they imagine a future of democratic liberation through revolutionary politics. Although the specifics are quite different, in both places 20th century unions have become tied to political parties which greatly limit possibilities for reframing worker experience. The convention of having central trade unions that were affiliated with political parties created workers' movements that were split across party lines in India. In such an ideological and political context, it is not surprising that workers' resistance has been limited to workplace issues. Although worker resistance clearly lives on, there is no meta-narrative at hand to link seemingly particular struggles to broader movements for emancipation. While we do not suggest that this means contemporary worker struggles are apolitical – even demanding better representation on the shopfloor is a form of politics – it does suggest that political action faces immense difficulty in scaling up.

There is mounting evidence that trade unions no longer are the repository of society's interests and are less so the counterforces to neoliberal globalization. The weakening of their bargaining position vis-à-vis capital, lack of a durable political ideology, or even a fleeting class rhetoric to hold the workers together and engage them in collective action with long-term goals, have weakened them as mobilizational alternatives. The inability of the central unions to provide a unified platform for protesting workers was clearly obvious in Gurgaon. Their inability to formulate strategies to counter the unapologetically pro-business National Democratic Alliance, and mobilize opposition effectively against the labor law reforms indicate that the heyday of unions formed in the 20th century is probably over. The capacity of labor movements to organize, have sustained struggles and be successful have come to depend on their ability and willingness to form coalitions with transnational movements and NGOs and align with broader concerns around environmental destruction and land dispossession. In China, the All China Federation of Trade Unions certainly provides centralization. But as is well-known, the ACFTU is subject to intensive control by the Communist Party, and is generally subordinate to management at the firm level. Unions in China have no capacity to effectively articulate and advance the aspirations of a new working class. Social movements such as the occupy movements, civil society and NGOs have become increasingly

prominent, and unions have attempted to make coalitions with these movements to stay relevant. It is not surprising then that trade unions in the automobile sector, which have historically been the vanguards of organized unionism, epitomize this weakening of unions.

While we see broad similarities in the dynamics of labor unrest in China and India's auto sectors, we have found that the Chinese state is *more* responsive to workers' unrest than democratic India. Though a comprehensive comparative analysis of state capacity and reflexivity is beyond the scope of this article, we would like to suggest that the Chinese and Indian states' differential responses emerge from their unique historical trajectories, particularly as relates to marketization and legal development. Until the mid 1990s, China had no legal framework for regulating labor relations – “wage labor” was seen as a capitalist practice, and was therefore wholly unacknowledged in the law. But the past twenty years have witnessed the construction of various institutions for regulating capitalist labor markets and employment relations. Despite a lack of formal democratic processes, the Chinese state has proven relatively responsive to growing labor unrest.⁶⁷ India, on the other hand has maintained a protective set of labor laws since independence, though these never constituted a class compromise as in the North.⁶⁸ Though provision of social citizenship was only for a small fraction of the workforce in the formal labor market, the state has consistently attempted to regulate the informal labor market through a series of protective legislations. Investors have long clamoured for a relaxation of labor protections, a position that has been enthusiastically embraced by the current right wing government. Thus, given very different starting points on the eve of marketization, China and India have been on opposing trajectories with respect to labor legislation, with the former moving towards greater regulation while the latter is embracing deregulation.

Relatedly, we found that the Indian state is more repressive towards striking workers. In both places, growth-obsessed local officials tend to side with employers in the resolution of labor conflict. The difference in India is that though it is extremely difficult to carry out a legal strike within the labor relations framework, workers have frequently dissented and justified their strikes based on democratic rights and freedoms.⁶⁹ The somewhat counterintuitive consequence of this, however, is that the state is emboldened to crack down on workers who are engaged in “illegal” tactics such as wildcat strikes. In China, strikes are extra-legal – the law simply makes no mention of them one way or the other, with the exception of the previously mentioned instance in Guangdong. Always fearful that social conflicts could spin out control, the Chinese state has been

rather circumspect in repressing striking workers. This is not to say that the police and courts never play a role in squashing dissent, and indeed recent evidence suggests stepped up repression in Guangdong.⁷⁰ But the regular police violence and mass criminalization of dissent that we see in India has not appeared in China. This should serve as a reminder that fractured militancy may be a generalizable trend in the South, but that local historical conditions will continue to have a profound impact on the development of labor politics.

Conclusion

In this article, we examined labor unrest in the automobile industry in China and India against the backdrop of 20th century labor movements. Labor movements in the automobile industry in northwestern Europe in the early-mid 20th century pressured states to introduce reforms and extend social citizenship to the workforce. The late 20th century autoworkers' movements in Brazil, South Africa and South Korea contributed to regime change and democratization. We have argued that China and India have, just as we might expect based on historical precedent, seen widespread militant resistance among auto workers. Nonetheless, this unrest has not elicited class compromise-style reforms from the state, nor has it coalesced into a political force capable of bringing about broader political transformation. We have characterized this labor unrest as fractured militancy, by which we mean widespread contestation that cannot scale up from firm-based politics to an industry-wide or national movement. Perhaps our conclusions are pre-emptive, given that the unrest is relatively recent, and it is premature to make a long term prediction. We nevertheless contend that the micro foundations for a collective movement against neoliberal capital are not present in these protests.

Whether or not similar dynamics will appear in other countries in the South remains to be seen. It is unlikely that any other countries will experience rapid growth in auto production in particular in the short term. But some noteworthy parallels have emerged in other countries in Southeast Asia. Vietnam likely has more strikes per capita than China,⁷¹ but there have been no significant moves towards reform.⁷² As in China, overt calls for regime change have been similarly muted. In Myanmar, labor played a negligible role in pushing for democratization. While unionization appears to be growing rapidly in the more relaxed environment, there is little evidence that workers are cohering into a significant political force. While it is too soon to draw major conclusions from this evidence, these cases suggest that neither reform nor regime change are on

the immediate horizon for Southern labor movements, and worker unrest will continue to be characterized by fractured militancy.

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Notes

¹ Throughout we refer to regular/irregular workers, despite recognizing it's imprecision. As a residual category, irregular labor includes contract, temporary, dispatch, and intern workers. We are using this terminology for the sake of consistency, even if we lose some precision.

² Silver, Beverly J, and Lu Zhang. "China: Emerging Epicenter of World Labor Unrest?" In *China and the Transformation of Global Capitalism*, edited by Ho-fung Hung. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

³ Silver, Beverly J. *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

⁴ Esping-Andersen, Gosta. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

⁵ Despite the fact that transition theorists often overlooked the role of labor and social movements more broadly, see Adler, Glenn, and Eddie Webster. "Challenging Transition Theory: The Labor Movement, Radical Reform, and Transition to Democracy in South Africa." *Politics and Society* 23 (1995): 75.

⁶ Seidman, Gay. *Manufacturing Militance: Workers' Movements in Brazil and South Africa, 1970-1985*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

⁷ This is not to suggest that labor movements were solely responsible for democratization. Indeed, in each case various kinds of cross-class alliances were necessary.

⁸ Huntington, Samuel P. "Democracy's Third Wave." *Journal of Democracy* 2, no. 2 (1991): 12–34.; Diamond, Larry Jay. "Is the Third Wave Over?" *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 3 (1996): 20–37.

⁹ The term “fractured militancy” has also been used by Marcel Paret in a draft manuscript to describe labor politics in South Africa. We each arrived at this term independently.

¹⁰ Refers to units produced, self-calculated from OICA data:
<http://www.oica.net/category/production-statistics/>

¹¹ Silver, *Forces of labor*, page 11.

¹² This is not to discount variation in the dynamics and outcomes of labor politics even within Europe. See Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D Stephens. *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

¹³ Wright, Erik Olin. “Working-Class Power, Capitalist-Class Interests, and Class Compromise.” *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 4 (2000): 957–1002.

¹⁴ See, Moore, Barrington. *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1966. and specifically on labor, Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, Evelyne Huber Stephens, and John D Stephens. *Capitalist Development and Democracy*.

¹⁵ Hall, Peter A. *Varieties of Capitalism*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2001.

¹⁶ Przeworski, Adam. “Social Democracy as a Historical Phenomenon.” *New Left Review* 1/122 (1980): 28–58.

¹⁷ Wright, Erik Olin. “Working-Class Power, Capitalist-Class Interests, and Class Compromise.” *American Journal of Sociology* 105, no. 4 (2000): 957–1002.

¹⁸ Scholars have characterized labor movements in the 20th century as “reformist” and “statist,” referring to its institutionalized history. Poulantzas, Nicos. *State, Power, Socialism*, London: New Left Books. 1978; Panitch, Leo. “Trade Unions and the Capitalist State.” *New Left Review* 125 (1):21–43, (1981); Therborn, Göran. What does the Ruling Class do when it Rules? London: New Left Books, 1978. Przeworski argued that capitalist democracy became the socially organized mechanism by workers could express their claims to the product of their labor. While as immediate producers, they had no institutionalized claim to the product, as citizens they processed such claims through the institutions of bourgeois democracy, fundamentally through the electoral institutions. Przeworski, Adam. “Proletariat into a Class: The Process of Class Formation from Karl Kautsky’s The Class Struggle to Recent Controversies.” *Politics & Society* 7 (4) (1977): 343–401.

¹⁹ Esping-Andersen, Gosta. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990. The concept of social citizenship was developed by T.H. Marshall to include the right to economic welfare and security to the right to participate fully in the institutions closely connected with “civilized society” such as the educational system and the social services. Marshall, Thomas Humphrey. *Citizenship and Social Class*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1950.

²⁰ The charge could certainly be made that by focusing on these three cases we are eliminating a host of other historical possibilities. While acknowledging that to be true, we focus on these three

cases as were are interested precisely in the places in which the labor movements, and specifically autoworker resistance, are most developed.

²¹ For an overview of the debate see the symposium here: *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 20, no. 4 (2008).

²² Seidman, Gay. *Manufacturing Militance*. Koo, Hagen. *Korean Workers: The Culture and Politics of Class Formation*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001; On South Korea, see also: Kwon, Seung-Ho, and Michael O'Donnell. "Repression and Struggle: The State, the Chaebol, and Independent Trade Unions in South Korea." *Journal of Industrial Relations* 41 (2) (1999): 272–294; Lee, Yoongkyung. *Militants or Partisans: Labor Unions and Democratic Politics in Korea and Taiwan*. Stanford University Press, 2011.

²³ It goes without saying that the nature of the relationship to US empire was quite different in South Africa, Brazil, and South Korea.

²⁴ Pereira, Anthony. W. Working for Democracy: Brazil's Organized Working Class in Comparative Perspective. *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 49 (1996), 93-115.

²⁵ Adler, Glenn, and Eddie Webster. "Challenging transition theory: The labor movement, radical reform, and transition to democracy in South Africa." *Politics and Society* 23 (1995): 75-106; Seidman, *Manufacturing Militance*.

²⁶ Lee, Yoonkyung, *Militants or partisans*.

²⁷ Haines, Herbert. "Black Radicalization and the Funding of Civil Rights." *Social Problems* 32, no. 1 (1984): 31–43.

²⁸ Classic definitions of social movement stress the role of "social movement organizations" and rationally articulated demands targeting the state. See, McAdam, Doug, Sidney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly. *Dynamics of Contention*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

²⁹ E.g. Butollo, Florian, and Tobias ten Brink. "Challenging the Atomization of Discontent: Patterns of Migrant-Worker Protest in China during the Series of Strikes in 2010." *Critical Asian Studies* 44, no. 3 (2012): 419–440.; Chan, Chris King-Chi, and Elaine Sio-Jeng Hui. "The Development of Collective Bargaining in China: From 'Collective Bargaining by Riot' to 'Party State-Led Wage Bargaining.'" *The China Quarterly* 217 (2013): 221–242.; Chan, Chris King-Chi, and Elaine Sio-leng Hui. "The Dynamics and Dilemma of Workplace Trade Union Reform in China: The Case of the Honda Workers' Strike." *Journal of Industrial Relations* 54, no. 5 (2012): 653–668; Friedman, Eli. *Insurgency Trap: Labor Politics in Postsocialist China*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.; Gray, Kevin, and Youngseok Jang. "Labour Unrest in the Global Political Economy: The Case of China's 2010 Strike Wave." *New Political Economy* 20(4) (2014): 1–20; Lyddon, Dave, Xuebing Cao, Quan Meng, and Jun Lu. "A Strike of 'Unorganised' Workers in a Chinese Car Factory: The Nanhai Honda Events of 2010" no. May 2010 (2015): 134–152.

³⁰ See, <http://column.global-labour-university.org/2011/01/trade-unions-and-worker-struggles-in.html> (accessed July 2, 2015)

³¹ Elfstrom, Manfred, and Sarosh Kuruvilla. "The Changing Nature of Labor Unrest in China." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 67, no. 2 (2014).

³² P. 316 in Friedman, Eli. "Insurgency and Institutionalization: The Polanyian Countermovement and Chinese Labor Politics." *Theory and Society* 42, no. 3 (March 26, 2013): 295–327.

³³ July 28, 2010. "guangdong qiye minzhu guanli tiaoli re zhengyi, jiti xieshang cheng jiaodian." *21 Shiji Jingji Baodo*.

³⁴ Lau, Rena. 2012. "Restructuring of the Honda Auto Parts Union in Guangdong, China: A 2-Year Assessment of the 2010 Strike." *Working USA* 15 (December): 497–515.

³⁵ "shi da anli" internal union booklet.

³⁶ See, Chen, Feng. 2003. "Between the State and Labour: The Conflict of Chinese Trade Unions' Double Identity in Market Reform." *The China Quarterly* 176: 1006–1028.

———. 2009. "Union Power in China: Source, Operation, and Constraints." *Modern China* 35: 662–689.

³⁷ Interview, December 3, 2013.

³⁸ Interview, November 16, 2013.

³⁹ Information in this paragraph comes from an open letter penned by the union chair to higher levels of the union. See:
http://weibo.com/p/1001603855394173801448?from=page_100606_profile&wvr=6&mod=wenzhangmod.

⁴⁰ <http://www.clb.org.hk/en/content/five-years-nanhai-honda-workers-want-more-their-trade-union>.

⁴¹ Interview, December 3, 2013.

⁴² Friedman, Eli, and Sarosh Kuruvilla. "Experimentation and Decentralization in China's Labor Relations." *Human Relations* (2015).; Zhang, Hao. Collective Bargaining in China: Informal Wage Coordination and Informal Bargaining Procedures. MA Thesis.

⁴³ Doyal Pankaj. "India speeds past China in auto exports." *The Times of India*, September 8, 2009.

⁴⁴ Humphrey, John. "Globalization and supply chain networks: the auto industry in Brazil and India." *Global Networks* 3, no. 2 (2003): 121–141.

⁴⁵ http://www.laborcommission.org/files/uploads/Shattered_Dreams-web.pdf.; Humphrey, "Globalization and supply chain networks."

⁴⁶ Authors' Observations; Bose, A. J. *Labour Relations in a Liberalized Industry: A Study of Indian Automobile Workers*. Unpublished PhD Thesis submitted to Department of Economics, BR Ambedkar Bihar University, Muzaffarpur, 2012; Posthuma, Anne and Dev Nathan. Edited. *Labour in global production networks in India*. Abe Books, 2012.

⁴⁷ Annavajhula, J. C. B., and Surendra Pratap. "Worker Voices in an Auto Production Chain." *Economic & Political Weekly* 47, no. 33 (2012); Galib, Mostak Ahamed, Kamrun Nahar Munny,

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⁴⁸ To dispel the thought that these protests are linked to the financial crisis, we point out that there are many instances of protests before 2008, the most important being the successful strike of the Honda workers in 2005. An analysis of the global automobile market fluctuations and labor unrest is a worthy analysis, but beyond the scope of this paper.

⁴⁹ The Indian state started a joint venture with the Japanese Suzuki Corporation, the Maruti Udyog Limited (MUL) in 1983. This joint venture between transnational and state capital has been the most important contributor to the almost threefold increase in passenger car production between 1980s and 1990s, and has been the principal source for restructuring the Indian automobile industry, with private and Japanese joint ventures in the production of two-wheelers and commercial vehicles. D'Costa, Anthony P. *The Long March to Capitalism: Embourgeoisment, Internationalization, and Industrial Transformation in India*, Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

⁵⁰ <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/gone-in-50-seconds/article2601780.ece>, November 6, 2011, Aman Sethi.

⁵¹ Jha and Chakrabrty.

⁵² Interview with terminated workers were conducted in a lawyers' office. Interview with the current union president was conducted in a park, since visitors were not allowed to the union office inside the firm.

⁵³ GurgaonWorkersNews no.64 – November 2015, <https://gurgaonworkersnews.wordpress.com/2015/11/11/gurgaonworkersnews-no-64-november-2015/>, accessed on January 7, 2016.

⁵⁴ Interviewed on December 12, 2014.

⁵⁵ *Business Line*, November 8, 2013.

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⁵⁹ Trade Unions including the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, affiliated with the BJP, have taken stands against these labor reforms. The central trade unions had a national convention on May 26, 2015, and they went on a national strike on September 2 against the central government initiated reforms. *The Times of India*, May 5, 2015; *The Economic Times*, May 26, 2015.

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⁶¹ Weiss, Linda. *The Myth of the Powerless State*. Cornell University Press. 1998.

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⁶⁶ Zhang, Lu. *Inside China's Automobile Factories: The Politics of Labor and Worker Resistance*. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

⁶⁷ See, Mertha, Andrew. "'Fragmented authoritarianism 2.0': political pluralization in the Chinese policy process." *The China Quarterly* 200 (2009): 995-1012. On labor politics in particular, see

Friedman, Eli. "Alienated Politics: Labor Insurgency and the Paternalistic State in China." *Development and Change* 45(5) (2004): 1001-1018.

⁶⁸ See, Chibber, Vivek. "From Class Compromise to Class Accommodation: Labor's Incorporation into the Indian Political Economy." In *Social Movements in India: Poverty, Power and Politics*, edited by Raka Ray and Mary Fainsod Katzenstein, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005:32-61.

⁶⁹ Nair, Manjusha. (Forthcoming) *Undervalued Dissent: Informal Workers' Politics in India*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2016.

⁷⁰ In particular, the December 2015 roundup of labor NGO activists has had a chilling effect on worker advocates, even if it has had no apparent impact on the number of strikes.

⁷¹ Chan, Anita. "Strikes in China's Export Industries in Comparative Perspective." *The China Journal* 65 (2011): 27-51.

⁷² Vietnam has promised labor reforms as a condition of participating in the Trans-Pacific Partnership. However, it is much too soon to draw any significant conclusion from this, and we will have to see how these reforms play out in practice.

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