
A South Asian Dilemma: The Role of Religion in the Public Sphere

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All of the independent states that emerged in South Asia after the withdrawal of the British in 1947 have had to confront the complex problem of the role that religion was to have in the public sphere.* The word “dilemma” in this essay’s title was chosen for its primary dictionary meaning: a situation forcing a choice that one does not want to make, with the outcome of either choice likely to be unfavorable. The historical experience of the countries of South Asia suggests that the dilemma concerning the place of religion in the public sphere was forced on them after independence. As they moved from authoritarian regimes, in which decisions on public policy had been made without much recourse to ascertaining the wishes of the people, to ones that required legitimization by legislative assemblies and political parties that both created and were responsive to the will of the people, they had to choose between the alternative of a secular state or one where religion of the majority was given a privileged position in the public sphere—as indeed it had always been under both Hindu and Muslim regimes (the religiously neutral state was an introduction of the British). The reference to religion, a word that is as evasive in meaning as it is ubiquitous, demands some explanation of how it is being used. I mean here not personal piety of devotion, or theological beliefs as such, but rather religion in its social context as an institutionalized fusing of memories and experiences around symbols and symbolic figures. In this usage, the function of religion in the public sphere refers to what the anthropologist Melford Spiro calls “culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings.”¹ In such an understanding, there is, of course, no attempt made to adjudicate true claims or to

differentiate a “true” religion from the versions of belief and behavior formulated by adherents.

In post-independence South Asia, a major issue in political decision-making had to do with the degree of control or influence appeals to such institutionalized religious sentiments should have in the formation of policy with regard to a wide variety of concerns. These include what is known in South Asia as “personal law,” that is, the regulation of such matters as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. The content of education is also involved, as well as forms of behavior that may be regarded as consistent with, or in violation of, religious norms. Censorship of material that may be regarded as blasphemous by religious groups has been a frequent issue. In general, the problem has to do with giving a privileged position to one particular religion in defining national life. The analogy that is often suggested for an understanding of such problems is the American concept of the separation of church and state, but this is not very useful in South Asia, where none of the dominant religions—Hinduism, Islam, or Buddhism—have organizations corresponding to the ecclesiastical structures of Christianity. What is involved in South Asia is a far more complex situation, with religious identities embedded in linguistic groups, ethnicities, and historical experience. In all three countries important groups claim that the religion of the majority has a special function as the dynamic center of the national culture. It is a problem related, not just to the displacement of foreign rule, but to the emergence of electoral politics where an appeal for legitimacy has to be made to the citizens, not to the power of the ruler. Such an appeal is directly related to the rise of political parties which claim to represent the popular will, in all three countries, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

Religion in Politics in Pre-Independence India, 1920–1947

In broadest terms, it was the issue of religion as a defining factor in nationalism that led to the Partition of the subcontinent—that had been ruled by the British as a unitary state—into the two nations of India and Pakistan. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, had insisted in 1940, as he called for the creation of Pakistan, that India was an artificial construct, maintained by British bayonets; for a thousand years the political reality had been a Hindu India and a Muslim India. This vision of history was denounced as radically false by the Indian National Congress, the dominant voice of Indian nationalism, which argued that India was rooted in a historical experience that transcended the categories of religion, and that no one religion, neither Hinduism nor Islam, could be a defining factor of nationalism in a religiously plural society.

Jawaharlal Nehru, as the leader of the Indian National Conference and as India’s first prime minister, was the great champion of the secular state. His reasoning was plain enough. One of the characteristic features of public life from the 1920s on was the outbreaks of violence between Hindu and Muslim communi-

ties. "Communalism" is the term given in India to such violence, and it has been defined as "an ideology and a movement that employs narrow religious loyalty as a basis of collective action, and in the process accentuates artificially contrived distinctions and heightens community-oriented consciousness."² The antagonisms between warring groups may

be rooted in many factors—social, economic, class—but religious affiliations become the identifying marker, even though such affiliations may be nominal. This had special significance after the constitutional reforms of 1919 greatly increased the numbers of voters who elected representatives to the provincial legislature. Following a pattern familiar to representative government elsewhere, politicians appealed to religious identities of their constituents. A Hindu politician put his dilemma neatly in 1926 when he remarked that "unless I call the other community names and damn them before my electorate, I have no chance of being elected."

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This was the communal situation, with all its accompanying violence, that led Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal's father, to declare in 1928 that religion stood for ignorance and bigotry, and by bringing religion into politics, "Religion has been degraded and politics has sunk into the mire. Complete divorce of one from the other is the only remedy."⁴ Observing the same troubled landscape, Jawaharlal Nehru, Gandhi's closest political ally, despaired at the depth of Hindu-Muslim antagonism, "a whirlpool of mutual hatred," that he saw standing in the way of a united India. He himself saw India, as he put it, "not as religious units but as units of hungry Indian masses who cry out loudly for succour."⁵ Nehru knew, of course, that many Muslim leaders had expressed anti-Hindu statements, but he was even more aware of the anti-Muslim feelings that colored the thinking and actions of many of the leading figures within the Indian National Congress as well as in the wider population. He was convinced that, as the majority community it was the responsibility of Hindus to make concessions. He looked wistfully towards Europe, where, he believed, religion had been vanquished through education, and he thought the process would "scotch our so-called religion and secularize our own intelligentsia."⁶

Mahatma Gandhi deplored religious communalism no less than the Nehrus, but he was convinced that they were utterly wrong in supposing that one could extract religion from the context of Indian life. People who say that religion has nothing to do with politics, he said, are only showing that they know nothing of either religion or politics. His own solution for the virus of communalism was not to get rid of religion in politics, but to permit its full expression by all faiths through love, compassion, tolerance, and non-violence. How much greater communal violence would have been if it had not been for Gandhi's pleas for recon-

ciliation we have, of course, no way of knowing, but it did not stop the ultimate demand for a place for religion in the public sphere, the creation of the Muslim state of Pakistan or the fearful violence that accompanied it.

The causes of the Partition of the India of British rule into two nations, India and Pakistan is the subject of a large and controversial literature, but here there is space for only a few generalizations relating to the role of religion. One is that Partition was not the product of an Islamic religious movement, but of a political movement, led by Muhammed Ali Jinnah, who articulated a Muslim nationalism as an alternative to the nationalism of the Indian National Congress. The most vigorous and best organized religious movement within Indian Islam, the Jamat'at-i-Islami, was virulently opposed to Pakistan on the grounds that, as its leader, Maulana Maudidi, put it, "Muslim nationalism is reprehensible in the Shari'a [law] of God as Indian nationalism," and "not a single leader of the Muslim League from Jinnah himself to the rank and file has an Islamic mentality or Islamic habits of thought."⁷ The second generalization is that as a political movement the demand for Pakistan was not framed in terms of an assertion of Islam in the public sphere—that is, the application of Islamic law, the Shari'a—rather it was seen as a way to escape the dominance of a Hindu majority that threatened, not Islam, but the welfare of the Muslim community. This sense of a threat to Muslims as citizens, as articulated by Jinnah and others, leads to a third generalization: the growth of a dynamic Hindu nationalism that identified the Muslim population as an alien element in the national life. Aggressive Hindu political and cultural movements, such as Arya Samaj, the Hindu Mahasabha, and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS), had articulated a Hindu nationalism that sometimes opposed the Indian National Congress but also worked with it. All through the period from 1920 to the Partition of India in 1947, these groups were a potent source of the unease felt by Muslims as electoral politics prepared for the reality of an independent India where the vast Hindu majority would be in a position to give Hindu culture its rightful place in the public sphere. The rise of Hindu nationalist parties, like the Bharatiya Janata Party, are only explicable if one keeps in mind that their ideological origins lie in the pre-independence period.

India, 1947–1997

In a very real sense, to examine the role of religion in the public sphere in post-independence India would require a detailed analysis of both public policies and social history, but all that can be attempted here is to mention a few defining aspects of the period. Among these are the violence that accompanied Partition; the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi; the sections in the Constitution specifically concerned with religion; and the formation of political parties that promoted a nationalism defined in terms of Hindu culture.

The figures for the violence of 1947 are mind-numbing: half a million people were slaughtered, not in war, but in personal violence, and thirteen mil-

lion refugees were displaced from both countries. Since religion was blamed, directly or indirectly, for both what was often referred to as the vivisection of the Motherland as well as for the immense dislocation of life, especially in North India, caused by the flood of refugees, the role that religion was to play in the public sphere was of constant concern. This concern, however, was felt in two opposing ways. There were those who believed that the lesson to be learned was that religion was to be wholly separated from politics; and there were those who felt, on the contrary, that the nation must come to terms with the fact that while India was a religiously pluralistic society, every aspect of its culture was permeated by the Hindu tradition and that the secularism of Nehru and his followers was a denial of that tradition. Above all, almost all observers from the period testify how deep was the hostility to Muslims as the cause of Partition and its attendant suffering. The assassination of Gandhi on January 30, 1948 came as a climax to those first storm-filled months of independence.

Nehru is reported to have said "Thank God" when he was told that the assassin was a Hindu, not a Muslim. The killer was driven by hatred for what he and many others regarded as Gandhi's misplaced concern for the fate of India's Muslims, and shouts of "death to Gandhi" had been heard in previous weeks at his prayer meetings. Thirty-six years later in 1984 when Nehru's daughter, Prime Minister India Gandhi, was assassinated by her Sikh bodyguard, fearful vengeance was taken as Hindu mobs systematically slaughtered thousands of Sikhs in Delhi. In 1948, Gandhi's death seemed to have a strangely calming effect as if it had shocked people into a recognition of the evil that could be legitimized in the name of religion. This may be one of Gandhi's more enduring legacies.

It is often said that the Indian constitution is more reflective of British and American political theory and practice than Indian, and there is much truth in this, but the sections dealing specifically with religion in fact come directly from the crucible of modern Indian historical experience. India was not officially declared a secular state until a constitutional amendment was passed in 1974, but that amendment only codified two emphases that were already present. One of these, often articulated by Gandhi, is that all religions are true, and that a secular, or religiously neutral, state is a recognition that all should find a place within the framework of Indian culture. For Gandhi, and for many Indians, this was an answer to the pressing political problem of Hindu-Muslim antagonism: in effect, to deny that there could be any fundamental antagonism since both religions were equally true. The difficulty with this formulation is that it is an explicit rejection by Hindus of the truth that Muslims see as categorical—the revealed truth of the Quran. The other emphasis in the Indian version of secularism, the one stated with such vigor by Nehru, is that religion must not be permitted to influence political decisions and politics. One guesses that by 1948, in the wake of the communal violence of Partition and Gandhi's assassination, the majority of opinion makers in India—journalists, academics, politicians, business people—would have given assent to Nehru's proposition that "the cardinal doctrine of

modern democratic practice is the separation of the state from religion,” and that “the idea of a religious state” has “no place in the mind of a modern man.”⁸

The place of religion in the public sphere was the subject of intense debate during the constitutional debates in 1948–1949. The advocates of a secular state found themselves in a dilemma which has remained central for India. As a secular

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state, the government could not in any way favor Hinduism, but as a state it had the right and duty to promote Indian culture. However, this culture—its art, literature, music, philosophy, morality—

is as saturated and colored by Hinduism, as the European Middle Ages were by Christianity. What was to be the place of other religions with different, and, at times, conflicting cultures?

Article 25:1 in the Constitution, which guarantees individual religious freedom, states that “all persons are equally entitled to the freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion.” There was little objection to guaranteeing freedom of worship, but there was very strenuous objection from many Hindu groups and individuals to the right to propagate religion, and it was only inserted after much argument. Christians and Muslims just as strenuously demanded such a right, arguing that propagation of their faiths was a divine command.

The opposition to this demand has three strands. One is that the idea of conversion to another faith through proselytization is repellent to many Hindus, for Hinduism is, as it were, genetically acquired through birth, and one should remain in the religion in which one is born. Closely related to this is another strand: that conversion to another religion is socially destructive, breaking the bonds of social intercourse. Furthermore, the third, and more popular, argument is that the two religions that seek conversions, Islam and Christianity, introduce alien customs, beliefs, and practices that corrupt Indian civilization. Through the years, this has become a potent argument of the RSS and other Hindu nationalist groups against Indian Muslims and Christians.

Hindu nationalism became significant with the formation of political parties that embodied its ideas. The Jana Sangh, founded in 1951, had considerable support in the late 1960s, but its leaders founded the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which by 1997 had become the major opposition party in parliament. The BJP, although the most prominent, is only one of many organizations, including trade unions, youth groups, and print media, associated through leadership cadres and ideology with the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS). Both the BJP and RSS assert that they are not advocates of Hinduism as a religion having a primary place in India’s public sphere, but rather Hindu culture, of which, they argue, Hinduism as a religion is only one expression.

Muslims and Christians see the identification of the Indian nation and Indian culture as "Hindu," as excluding them from full participation in national life unless they deny essential elements in their own religious culture. But the intention of the BJP to make religion part of the public sphere, even in an attenuated form, is rejected with vehemence by many whom the Hindu nationalists would regard as within their cultural definition of Hinduism. These include the Sikhs, Buddhists, and many of the people once known as "untouchables," but many of whom now prefer the term "dalit," meaning downtrodden or oppressed. However, the most vocal and perhaps the most important opponents of the attempt to give Hindu culture a special place in the public sphere are the intellectuals—journalists, academics, and professionals. They insist that not only is this attempt profoundly divisive but that it ignores the inescapable fact that the immense divergence covered under the rubric "Hindu" make it divisive within the Hindu community itself.

Rejection of the claim of the BJP to speak, however vaguely, for a place for Hinduism in the public sphere goes a long way to explicating the politics in India in the fiftieth year of independence. When the United Front government, made up of thirteen disparate parties, lost a vote of confidence in March 1997, rather than have an election that might have given the BJP new strength, the United Front and the Congress Party came to an agreement that permitted I.K. Gujral of the United Front to take office as Prime Minister. While the normal political imperatives, such as the desire to hold office, no doubt were at work, distrust of what has been called "the Hinduizing agenda" of the BJP was the major factor. Not only was Gujral committed to the secular state, but also to the position that India, as the stronger power, must make some concessions to Pakistan.

Pakistan

Pakistan followed almost the directly opposite policy in defining the place of religion in the public sphere, for the Constitution declares that Pakistan is an Islamic state. This is of great importance, not only for Pakistan's domestic development but also for its foreign policy. As an Islamic state, it has sought close relations with the Arab states of the Middle East, with Iran, with the states of Central Asia since the collapse of the Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, with Malaysia and Indonesia. In its relations with India, however, Pakistan's self-definition as an Islamic state has unfortunately had negative results.

Pakistan, as stressed above, was born out of a political, not a religious, movement that insisted Muslims as a community would be discriminated against in a state dominated by the Hindu majority, and they would not be free to develop their own culture and institutions. In a remarkable speech given just before independence, Jinnah had argued that the homeland for Muslims had been achieved, but in that homeland, there would be no discrimination against any creed, and what he called "the angularities" of religious communities would disappear: "you

may belong to religion or caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the State.”⁹ Jinnah’s great prestige might have maintained this vision, but after his death in 1948 there was a strong demand to declare Pakistan an Islamic state. Religion in the public sphere thus became a matter of central importance for the new state, coloring many aspects of its life, but space will permit only mentioning constitutional issues, the application of Islamic law, treatment of minorities, and the status of women.

Pakistan has enacted three constitutions, and in all of them the place of religion received special attention. The first constitution, enacted in 1956, declared that Pakistan was an Islamic state, under the sovereignty of Allah, where Muslims could live in accordance with the Quran and Sunnah, the law of Islam. However, it was not spelled out what this meant in practice, and the politicians and the *ulama*, Islamic legal scholars, quarreled fiercely over how the traditional laws were to be applied in the modern world. The demands for the application of Islamic law were voiced most vigorously by the Jam‘at-i-Islami, led by Maulana Maududi, who before independence had opposed the creation of Pakistan on the grounds that Jinnah was proposing a Western-style nationalism that had no relevance to Islam. “I do not believe,” he said “in government of the people, by the people, for the people. I believe in the rulership of God.”¹⁰ He probably expressed a widespread opinion when he argued that Pakistan was meaningless unless Islamic law became the law of the land. The Jam‘at demonstrated its power, not through direct victories in electoral politics, but in its ability to organize support for politicians who followed its agenda and, conversely, to bring out crowds against those who opposed them.

When General Ayub Khan overthrew the civilian government in 1958, he excoriated both the politicians and the *ulama* as reactionary and corrupt. He said that even before Pakistan had been created, the *ulama* had feared that they would lose out to the educated Muslim elite, and therefore they were trying to prevent progress and modernization by saying that reform was un-Islamic. In the end, however, when a new constitution was written in 1962, Pakistan was once more declared an Islamic state, despite Ayub, stating that no laws would be passed repugnant to Islam. The preamble denounced such un-Islamic behavior as the taking of usury, gambling, the use of alcohol, and prostitution. But, as it has been pointed out, the constitution “left the implementation of these norms and aspirations to the concerned officials, effectively excluding judicial intervention.”¹¹ Further Islamicization of certain aspects of the public sphere occurred when civilian rule was restored under the prime ministership of Zulfikar Bhutto (1970–1977) who, although the most westernized of Pakistan’s leaders, needed to quiet the opposition of the Jama‘at. One measure was the declaration in the new constitution of 1973 that Islam was the state religion, with an obligation to bring all existing laws into conformity with Islam. Another was the ruling that the Ahmadiya group were non-Muslims because, it was alleged, they believed that their founder was a successor of the Prophet, a heretical belief. The group had long been sub-

jected to much violence, but the new ruling prescribed severe punishments if they claimed to be Muslims. Christians and Hindus make up less than 3 percent of the population, most of them very poor, and while they are permitted freedom of worship, they are often subjected to attacks by mobs.

The strongest drive towards bringing the public sphere under control of Islam took place under General Zia, who overthrew Bhutto in a military coup in 1977. Apparently a pious Muslim himself, Zia found support for his policy of Islamicization from the military, the *ulama*, and many middle class people who saw it as strengthening the moral foundations of society. Islamicization meant, in effect, a movement from the

Islamic aspirations expressed in the various constitutions to enactment of laws considered to be in keeping with traditional Islamic law. What are often referred to as "Islamic punishments" were instituted, such as

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amputation of the right hand for theft—apparently not carried out—stoning for adultery, and a hundred lashes for drinking alcohol. To the relief of many people in Pakistan, these laws were often modified in practice. For example, a not very successful attempt was made to stop the payment of interest on loans, a practice which violates Islamic law. The obligatory observance of Ramadan, the month of fasting, is, however, rigorously enforced.

Women were most affected by many of the provisions of the Islamic law, despite the insistence of both politicians and religious leaders that the laws are for the protection of women, and that those who live with true Islamic society will not find them onerous. As Maulana Maududi has put it, in such a society, "where mixed gatherings of men and women were prohibited, where public appearance of painted and pampered women is completely non-existent, where marriage has been made easy, then "remembrance of God and the hereafter is kept every fresh in men's minds."¹² But the reality of Pakistani society is not congruent with this pious hope, and certain aspects of Islamicization fall severely on women. Perhaps the most egregious has to do with rape. If a woman claims she has been raped, the law requires that she produce male witnesses; when this cannot be done, the woman is then accused of admitting to having committed adultery, and is punished. Aside from injustices, women's groups have complained that the universities have yielded to pressure from religious leaders to segregate women's education, that there is pressure for women to go veiled, and that the law equates the evidence of one man to that of two women. That Benazir Bhutto was able to become prime minister through a free election is often cited as evidence that women are not discriminated against in politics, but there is little evidence that she was able or desired to do much to change the laws that treat women with less than equality.

While there is considerable evidence that the pressure to Islamize the public sphere has lessened since the death of Zia in 1988 and the restoration of electoral politics, no real changes have been made in the existing laws. Pakistan remains an Islamic state with Islam having a privileged legal place enjoyed by few religions elsewhere in the modern world, except Islam in Saudi Arabia and Judaism in Israel. The difficulty in legislating Islam—or any religion—into the public sphere in a modern state was pointed out by Chief Justice Munir after violent riots against the Ahmadiyas had swept Punjab in 1953:

If there is one thing which has been conclusively demonstrated in this inquiry, it is that provided you can persuade the masses to believe that something that they are asked to do is religiously right or enjoined by religions, you can set them to any course of action, regardless of all considerations of discipline, loyalty, decency or morality or civic sense.

As for passing laws that will make people lead virtuous lives, Munir concluded that “our politicians should understand that if Divine commands cannot make or keep a man a Musalman, their statutes will not.”¹³ Harsh words, but they often been confirmed for many religions in many times and places.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka presented a striking contrast to both India and Pakistan in the early years after it became independent in 1948. It suffered none of the agonies of partition on religious lines that has convulsed those countries, and in defining its national identity, religion seemed to have played little formative role, either before or immediately after independence. Unfortunately, this impression of calm stability proved illusory, for Sri Lanka approached its fiftieth year racked by insurgencies to an extent unmatched elsewhere in South Asia.

The leaders who came to power with the departure of the British were the most westernized, indeed the most anglicized, in the subcontinent, and they were intent on building a democratic, if paternalistic, political society. There were, however, tensions from linguistic, ethnic, and religious divisions that exploded into violence that still continues. About 74 percent of the population regard themselves as Sinhala, the original inhabitants of the island; they speak Sinhalese, and are mainly Buddhist by religion. Tamils, who trace their origin to the Tamilnadu region of South India, make up about 18 percent of the population, and are mainly Hindus. Muslims and Christians, drawn from both the Sinhaless and Tamils, make up the rest of the religious mix.

Two families, the Senanayakes and the Bandaranaiques, were striving for political control, and in the election campaigns of 1956, S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike's party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, found allies in the *bhikkhus*, the Buddhist monks who were dominant forces in the villages. More than anything else, it was

the activity of the *bhikkhus* that gave a religious role in Sri Lanka's troubles. James Manor, an American scholar, argues that the monks are virtually objects of worship, and that when they articulated demands of the extremist politicians for a recognition of Buddhism as the national religion of Sri Lanka and for Sinhalese as its language, they met with no dissent from their followers. Their pronouncements were "extreme, even hysterical, and naive," but they were received as showing the need to oppose anti-national and anti-religious forces symbolized by the Tamils.¹⁴ All parties, even the Marxists, had to accommodate themselves to these Buddhist-Sinhala demands.

Anti-Tamil riots broke out in 1958, in which hundreds of Tamils were killed. This was the beginning of fierce ethnic antagonism that threatened to overwhelm the state. Bandaranaike was assassinated in 1959 by a Buddhist monk who felt he had not fulfilled his election promises with regard to Buddhism and Sinhalese quickly enough, and successive governments were forced to pursue policies that seemed to discriminate economically against the Tamil minority. One of these, known as the "ethnic preference program" made it difficult for Tamil students—and easier for Sinhalese—to enter universities.

The joint causes of Buddhism and Sinhalese led to frequent anti-Tamil riots, leading not surprisingly to answering violence on the part of the Tamils. Groups of young Tamils became increasingly violent, and melding language grievances, claims of economic discrimination, and ethnic separatism, demanded independence for the Jaffna region, where the majority of Tamils lived. After thirteen soldiers were killed by the Tamil militants in 1983, riots broke out in other areas of the island, and thousands of Tamils were killed. From this point on, a virtual civil war existed within the state. The main Tamil insurgent group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, became increasingly brutal and ruthless, but even moderate Tamils argue—and international human rights group agree—that the government is just as brutal. In the beginning, the Tamils articulated their grievances largely in terms of economic and educational discrimination on linguistic and ethnic grounds, but as the violence of the state, identified with Buddhism, escalated, they inevitably added a sense of religious polarization. It must be emphasized, however, that emphasis on religious identity comes largely from the Buddhist majority, not the Hindu Tamil minority. American scholar Marshal Singer, thinking of regions where religion has fueled violence, has remarked, "The sad thing is that each time a bomb goes off and kills more civilians, whether in Sri Lanka, Israel or Ireland, more and more people become convinced that 'there will be no peace if bombs keep killing people,' and there is virtually no way to stop those bombs going off."¹⁵ In 1996, Sri Lanka had the unenviable record of more murders by terrorists than any all other countries combined, according to the U.S. Department of State.¹⁶

Conclusion

After fifty years of independence, it is by no means certain how the choices that were made at various times in the different countries with regard to the place of religion will work out. The conflicts engendered by bringing religion into the public sphere, as seen in India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, have been emphasized in this essay, as that seems the plain reading of historical experience. Another possible reading is suggested, however, by Mark Juergensmeyer in a book with the suggestive title, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State*. Religious nationalism of the kind seen South Asian countries, as well as in Iran, Egypt, and Israel, may be viewed, he argues, "as one way of reconciling heretofore unreconcilable elements—traditional religion and modern politics."¹⁷ It is plausible that this is the process working itself out in Pakistan since the restoration of electoral politics in 1988 and in India since the containment of the BJP by the United Front of secular parties. The returns, however, are not yet in. Looking back over the period, the conviction of this observer remains that "the use of the vocabulary of religion has corrupted political discourse in [South Asia] and is likely to continue too so in the immediate future. And, unhappily, this is so not only in [South Asia] but wherever the vocabulary and vision of religion is used to institute a social order opposed by groups with equally strong and valid claims upon the future."¹⁸ 

Endnotes

* Seven states are included under the rubric of "South Asia." India, with approximately 950 million people; Pakistan, with 134 million; Bangladesh, with 130 million; Nepal, with 24 million; and Sri Lanka, with 21 million. The other two are Bhutan, with 2million, and the Maldives, with 270,000 inhabitants.

¹ Melford E. Spiro, "Problems of Definition and Explanation," *Anthropological Approaches*, 96.

² *Ibid.*, 4.

³ G.R. Thursby, *Hindu-Muslim Relations in British India: A Study of Controversy, Conflict, and Communal Movements in British India, 1923–1928* (Leiden: Brill, 1975) 176.

⁴ Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1885–1930* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1991) 253.

⁵ Papiya Ghosh, "Recasting Nationalism: Nehruvian Secularism and Syed Mahmud," *Journal of Historical Studies* 2, (December 1996): 121.

⁶ Hasan, 285.

⁷ Rafiuddin Ahmed, "Refining Muslim Identity in South Asia: The Transformation of the Jam'at-i-Islami," in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds., *Accounting for Fundamentalism: The Dynamic Character of Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 675.

⁸ Donald E. Smith, *India as A Secular State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963) 155.

⁹ Muhammed Ali Jinnah, *Some Recent Speeches and Writings of Mr. Jinnah*, Jamil-ud-din Ahmad, ed. (Lahore: Ashraf, 1946–1947) 1:399–404.

¹⁰ Anwar Syed, *Pakistan: Islam, Politics, and National Solidarity* (New York: Praeger, 1982) 59.

¹¹ Syed, *Pakistan*, 103.

¹² Maulana Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitution* (Lahore: Pakistan Herald Press, 1955) 56.

¹³ "Munir Report," *Report to the Court of Inquiry Constituted under Punjab Act II to Inquire into the Punjab Disturbances of 1953* (Lahore: Government Printing Press, 1954) 231–232.

¹⁴ James Manor, "Organizational Weakness and the Rise of Sinhalese Buddhist Extremism," *Accounting for Fundamentalisms*, 776.

¹⁵ Marshal R. Singer, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict," *Asian Survey* 36, no. 11 (November 1996): 1148.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1154.

¹⁷ Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 191.

¹⁸ Ainslie T. Embree, *Utopias in Conflict: Religion and Nationalism in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990) 132.