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(De)Secularizing the Nation: Global Modernity and the Politics of Hindu Nationalism

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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BY

Shampa Biswas

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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Raymond Duvall, Adviser

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GRADUATE SCHOOL

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For
Ma and Baba

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Chapter One: Introduction

'Hindu Nationalism' and 'Global Modernity'

The Project

A young man, dressed smartly in trousers and shirt-sleeves, and manning the several phones and the fax machine at the home of one of the top leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), told me earnestly as I sat waiting for an interview with his boss, that the imminent "saffron age" in the new millenium would counter the rise of Islam in the world. Hindu nationalism in India is one among the many religious nationalist movements that have proliferated in the post-cold war world¹, and that are now warranting a lot of attention in scholarly literature and popular commentary around the world. The geographical span of this phenomenon seems wide, crossing established scholarly and popular boundaries of East/West, first world/third world, traditional/modern. If the study of religion was once the province of sociology, it is now common to find political scientists take a renewed interest in the study of religion and politics.

In this spread of religious nationalisms around the world, as well as in the coverage that it has received, there are at least two aspects that have been particularly interesting to me, both of them reflected in the figure of the young man that I referred to above.

¹ I am less concerned here with the 'end of the cold war' as either a framing moment or an explanatory device for understanding the rise of religious nationalisms, but more in interrogating the kind of attention that such phenomena have generated for scholars and commentators speculating on the 'post-cold war

The 'Paradox of Modernity'

Given the widespread expectation in much of social science literature, normed to a modernization paradigm, that the influence of religion in public-political life would be erased with the progressive institutionalization of modernity, it has been somewhat of a surprise, if not a shock, to see religion “come back” with such vengeance around the world. For those who might have expected religion to have been excised with the progress of modernity, this sense of bewilderment is exacerbated even more by what might seem to be a ‘paradox of modernity’. On the one hand is the interesting question of why the U.S., that celebrates its place at the pinnacle of modernity, continues to have the highest levels of religiosity among all industrial-developed countries, and starting with Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority movement in the early 1980s is now witnessing the marked resurgence of the New Christian Right influence in politics since the 1990s. On the other hand is the question of why around the world, parties like the BJP, are most popular among the “most modern/Westernized” sections of non-Western countries. In other words, if religion was to be banished with modernity, it is particularly fascinating and provocative (and something of a puzzle) to see religion and religious nationalist movements thrive best in and under modernity.

The 'Global Threat of Islam'

There is at the same time the prominence of a particular kind of ‘self-other’ construction that has accompanied the rise of religious nationalisms – reflected in the rising salience of the ‘Islamic issue’. With the end of the cold war, some writers and scholars have speculated that the rise of Islam as an organized political force at the global

level might come to constitute the new threat to the Western world (sometimes dubbed the 'new cold war'). Samuel Huntington's thesis on the rise of civilizational conflicts organized largely along religious lines supplanting the salience of the nation-state is now well known and has generated some debate.² On the one hand, even though the existence of a monolithic Islamic threat, unified and homogenous in its opposition to the West, given various differences of ideology and politics among Islamic organizations and Islamic states is quite problematic, there is still a tendency in Western scholarship and popular commentary on the rise of religious nationalisms to congeal around the 'global threat of Islam'. On the other hand, the rise of the 'Islamic issue' quite prominently and with certain disturbing implications, *within* many formally 'secular' states in both the Western and non-Western world, has also directed scholarly attention to this aspect of religious nationalisms. The significance of the Islamic issue is not limited to the various expressions of Islamic and Pan-Islamic nationalisms that have received much attention, but is also reflected in the growing Muslim presence and visibility within many formally secular states. Among the different countries in which the presence of Muslim populations and the rise of organized Islamic consciousness and politics has become a significant issue are Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the U.S., Turkey, Egypt, Israel, Algeria, the Philippines, India and Russia among others. Increasingly, this prominence accorded to the Islamic issue in a variety of different contexts often translates into a new binary – a "global threat of ('fundamentalist') Islam" vs. "the 'secular' West"

² Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations", in Foreign Affairs 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993). For various responses to Huntington's article, see Ajami, Bartley, Binyan, Kirkpatrick, Mahbubani, Piel and Weeks in Foreign Affairs 72, no. 4 (Sept./Oct. 1993). For an extensive account of the rise of religious nationalisms at the global level, see Mark Juergensmeyer, The New Cold War? Religious Nationalisms and the Secular State,

How do we understand the rise, success and significance of religious nationalisms in a modern and modernizing world, without succumbing to Orientalism? Even though the aim of this dissertation is to scrutinize the rise and success of religious nationalism in one particular site (the politics of Hindu nationalism in India), this is the question that guides this entire research project. The confluence of the above two forces provides some important clues, and some cautionary signs, in answering that question.

It seems to me that if scholars and commentators were unprepared for what might suddenly seem “an onslaught” of regressive, reactionary religious movements around the world, that is perhaps better attributed to the kinds of theoretical and conceptual tools at hand. The passions stirred by Khomeini’s rhetoric or the emotional appeal of Pat Robertson’s politics sat uneasily within the dominant theoretical frameworks available in the social sciences. Normed to ‘modernity in opposition to religion’, the explanatory thrust that emerged from such theoretical frameworks was to place such movements “outside” the pale of modernity (designated as ‘reactive explanations’ in chapter two). In doing that however, religious nationalisms in such accounts also became ways of both affirming and celebrating ‘modernity’. But it is in particular in such celebrations that ‘Orientalism’ rears its ugly head, situating religious nationalisms within the ontology of the ‘unmodern’ – the third world/the Islamic world. Hence one finds that even those who might recognize some modernizing aspects of religious nationalisms, nevertheless remain wedded to the tradition/modernity binary in thinking of religion and politics in a first world/third world context. This is reflected most prominently (but not exclusively) in the discourse on the ‘global threat of Islam’, highlighted in particular in chapter three. Once

again we find modernity affirmed and celebrated, but in its own specific and particular locale – the West.

How then may we understand the relationship of religious nationalisms with the issue of ‘modernity’? Clearly, the self-presentation of many such movements as “traditionalist *reactions* to modernity” (attempting to recuperate the “pre-modern”) is important, and serves particular political ends. Yet, an adequate *explanation* of their rise and in particular their success, requires us to move beyond the literalist aspect of such rhetoric, and *analyze* how such rhetoric works in and through modernity. Thus, in ‘solving’ the paradox of modernity, this dissertation situates contemporary religious nationalisms *within* modernity, *integrally* connected with and to various modernist projects, speaking to modernist aspirations (even if in the name of tradition), and helping negotiate the contradictions of modernity without forsaking the desire to *be modern*. Ultimately, the ‘paradox’ in the paradox of modernity is put to a lie (toning down our sense of bewilderment) if we understand religious nationalisms as located more centrally within modernity. While chapter two lays out the theoretical terrain that speaks to this issue, chapters five, six and seven examine how modernity is realized through the Hindu nationalist project in India.

At the same time, in guarding against the Orientalist epistemology that undergirds writing and thinking on the rise of religious nationalism (that even in speaking of the ‘global’ resurgence of religion, locates religious nationalisms as an *essential* aspect of the third world, and a *peripheral* aspect of the first world), this dissertation also attempts to deconstruct particular constructions of self-other relations that lie implicit in several modernist projects. In particular, this requires addressing and problematizing the

discursive prominence of the 'Islamic threat', and the self-congratulatory celebrations of 'Western secularism' (against which third world/Islamic fundamentalisms take shape). This is the primary purpose of chapter three, while the chapters on India highlight the discursive power of Orientalism by showing how its dichotomies work even in (and are reproduced through) such 'distant' sites.

It seems to me then that the rise of Hindu nationalism in India lies in some senses at the intersection of the two issues that I highlighted above, and signaled by the signifier of the young man that this chapter started with. While understanding the emergence and success of the BJP requires careful, contextual analysis (as attempted in the second part of this dissertation), it is possible to locate it also within and as an aspect of what I call here "global modernity" (as I do in the first part of this dissertation). In other words, even as this dissertation examines the rise of religious nationalisms in a particular and specific site, it also scrutinizes this phenomenon at a broader conceptual as well as global level. In that sense, and as I will speak to more in the conclusion to the dissertation, I study Hindu nationalism in India as located within one particular node in the articulation between the global and the local.

As mentioned previously, and as shown in the dissertation, the question of 'modernity' is inextricably bound up with Hindu nationalist discourse. Of the several modernist projects that remain integral to the Hindu nationalist discourse, the 'nation-state' takes pride of place. Further, as this dissertation argues, despite much speculation on the demise of the nation-state in the age of globalization and fragmentation, the nation-state remains a critical player in international relations. Hence, the more interesting question that this dissertation attempts to answer is: *how are (secular)*

national identities being reconstructed in a world of rising religious nationalisms? While chapter four theoretically interrogates the place and future of the nation-state in the contemporary world, chapters five, six and seven examine the reconstruction of national identity in a specific location (India). These latter three chapters explore the reconstruction of Indian national identity by (a) looking at how the discourse of Hindu nationalism reworks existing meanings in the process of creating a new ‘common-sense’ (that hinges on a Hindu/Muslim axis) within (b) the (discursive and material) ‘conditions of possibility’ for the emergence and success of this movement.

The BJP government that came to power in the 1998 elections recently fell due to the withdrawal of support by one of its allies. New elections are scheduled for September of this year. However, whether or not this current caretaker BJP government survives the upcoming elections this September (and all indications suggest that it will), the political place of Hindu nationalism has been established in ways that are now much more difficult to dislodge. More important than the emergence of the party as a significant electoral player in contemporary Indian politics, the politicization of contemporary Hindu nationalism has shifted the dominant agenda and discourse of Indian politics in ways that will likely be reflected through successor governments. It is this shift in public-political discourse that this dissertation attempts to explore.

‘Religious Nationalism’ or ‘Fundamentalism’?

It is common in the scholarly literature, official rhetoric, media coverage and popular usage to refer to political movements organized on religious lines as ‘fundamentalist’. However, I have in general resisted the use of that term in favour of the

term 'religious nationalisms' for a variety of reasons. Let me first begin by highlighting my primary reasons for rejecting the 'fundamentalist' label, and then state my reason for using the term 'religious nationalist' instead.

First, the genealogy of the term 'fundamentalism' can be traced to a particular movement within Protestant Christianity, the attempt of which was to create a new orthodoxy based on an inerrant, literalist, biblical interpretation of the 'fundamentals' of Christianity. In that sense, the use of this term could be seen as inappropriate for (a) the case of religions like Hinduism and Buddhism that do not, strictly speaking, rely on scriptural canonical texts that may be the basis for a literalist orthodoxy and (b) most contemporary religious movements, including ones based on scriptural religions, whose attempt is less to rely so clearly on such literal fundamentals, and much more to have a political influence based on (often very modern) interpretations of religious traditions.

Second, and interestingly, notwithstanding the specific genealogy of the term, 'fundamentalism' has in contemporary political discourse, taken on a clearly pejorative tone that comes from its association with the 'Islamic threat'. Part of my reason for rejecting the term comes from an attempt to work against the grain of Orientalism that permeates the literature on such movements. But I also reject the term because the general tendency to visualize fundamentalists (even when they are not Islamic) as "irrational" and "fanatical" is I believe detrimental to sound scholarship. While the political implications of many religious nationalist movements are indeed disturbing and serious, this is a conclusion, it seems to me, that needs to be established *post* research. To use a term that has clear pejorative associations, unproblematically, means in some senses to pre-judge such movements *prior to* analysis. In other words, religious

movements are not 'progressive' or 'regressive' per se, but such political conclusions must be the result of scholarly interrogation.

Finally, the use of the term 'religious nationalist' signifies the important articulation of such movements of religion to the 'national question'. This is so in at least two senses. On the one hand, most of these movements carry within them the construction of a community, imagined along religious lines, akin to Benedict Anderson's conceptualization of "the nation as an imagined community".³ On the other hand, most such movements also remain tied in some fashion to empirically existing nation-states (making claims on them, laying claims to them, or severing claims from them), as is clearly the case for the BJP in India. I speak to this aspect of such movements much more extensively in chapters four and seven of the dissertation.

A Note on Religion

I would also like to note here that I am not so much concerned here with understanding the concept of 'religion', as it is elaborated on in a vast literature in the sociology of religion as well as in theology, but more much in *exploring how religious differences get politicized*. In that sense, I only touch very briefly on issues such as the 'socially integrative potential of religion', or the 'transcendental/spiritual meanings that religions provide at the level of individual consciousness', which are important issues but tangential to the framework and purpose of this dissertation. In the dissertation I focus on religion primarily as a social category and look at religious differences among people as social, relational differences that take on historically and socially specific meanings. In

³ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Verso, London, 1983.

other words, my attempt is to look at religion as a means of social differentiation in particular socio-historic situations.

Research Framework

The empirical section of this dissertation looks at *the process through which a broad consensus around a particular articulation of national ideology has and is disintegrating and a new, exclusivist, nationalist ideology is being reconstructed around religious differences (that primarily hinges on a Hindu/Muslim axis)*. This requires exploring how meanings are created and recreated in the construction of a (somewhat coherent, even if contradictory) discourse that makes “common-sense”. Exploring issues of culture and meaning necessitates the adoption of an *interpretive*, or in terms of international relations theory, a *social constructivist* approach to social phenomena.⁴ This approach fits within a tradition that emphasizes that collective identities are socially constructed and enables the examination of the processes and social practices through

⁴ See Charles Taylor, “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man”, in P. Rabinow and W. Sullivan (ed.), Interpretive Social Science: A Second Look, University of California, Berkeley, 1987. For the application of Charles Taylor’s interpretive approach to the study of international relations, see Mark Neufeld, “Interpretation and the ‘Science’ of International Relations”, Review of International Studies, 19, 1993. For an explication of how to do a critical interpretive analysis, see Jim Thomas, Doing Critical Ethnography, Sage Publications, California, 1993; and Norman Fairclough, Discourse and Social Change, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992. It is also important to point out here that my own work has been heavily influenced by Stuart Hall’s analyses on the process through which cultural hegemony is created. In speaking of the creation of a new “common-sense” (that can secure “consent”) based on the rearticulations of existing understandings and knowledges, within changing socio-economic conditions, I draw quite clearly on Hall’s Gramscian conceptualization of how subjects are produced and meanings are naturalized through ideology. See Lawrence Grossberg, “History, Politics and Postmodernism: Stuart Hall and Cultural Studies,” Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10(2), Summer, 1986; Lawrence Grossberg (ed.), “On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall”, Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10(2), Summer, 1986; Stuart Hall, “Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates,” Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 2(2), June, 1985; Stuart Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,” Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10(2), Summer, 1986; and Stuart Hall, “The Problem of Ideology-Marxism without Guarantees,” Journal of Communication Inquiry, 10(2), Summer, 1986; and Stuart Hall, “The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists”, in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (ed.), Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, University of Illinois Press, 1988.

which such identities are reproduced and transformed. Hence, rather than taking social categories such as the ‘nation’ and ‘secularism’ (the two primary categories that this dissertation interrogates) as unproblematic, *natural* categories, a social constructivist approach helps explore *how such categories come to be constructed and imbued with certain kinds of meanings in particular socio-historic contexts*. There are three parts to this attempt, reflected broadly (but not strictly) in my three chapters on India. First, I look at the historically existing sets of meanings and pre-understandings (established through a series of colonialist and anti-colonialist projects) that create the “discursive conditions of possibility” for the emergence of Hindu nationalism in contemporary India. Second, I look at the socio-historic conditions or the political-economy of postcolonial India that create the “material conditions of possibility” for the emergence and success of the BJP in India. Finally, I look at how BJP discourse reconstructs existing sets of meanings to create new understandings of “Indianness” that can secure “consent” from a growing, urban, Hindu middle-class. In other words, my three empirical chapters explore the (re)construction of *consensual knowledge* in socio-historic contexts in which economic, demographic, and social changes are increasingly calling the background consensus into question.

Using a *qualitative* methodology, my analysis will be based primarily on a textual analysis of various kinds of documents and texts that are available in the public domain. For my study, I focussed primarily on two sets of (related) documents, some of which I collected during field work in India in the summer of 1996. The two sets refer to some of the most important *sites through which ideological hegemony is constructed*, and provide valuable sources for *evidence* of reconstructed social meanings.

1. The first set consists of the *public statements made by political leaders*. This consists of speeches, parliamentary debates, public addresses, presentations and discussions in various public fora, public policy debates etc., made by BJP leaders and spokespersons.
2. The second set of documents are drawn from the *print media*, that include news reports, editorials and several public opinion polls. Even though I collected articles from a number of national dailies, I concentrated for the most part on India Today, the most widely circulated Indian news magazine, both nationally and in the diaspora.

Rather than treat them as separate arenas with different logics of operation, my intent has been to draw out from the interconnected nature of these sites (a) how the representations of religious differences are being linked to the construction of the nation in such documents and (b) why that appeals or makes sense to people. In my selection of primary materials, I have focussed quite self-consciously on the “moderate face” of the BJP, rather than the clearly strident and extremist positions that emanate from a variety of more militant Hindu nationalist organizations. Even though the latter organizations are clearly important and dangerous, and I point in the dissertation to the ‘organic connections’ between them and the BJP, I believe that for the political project of Hindu nationalism to become hegemonic, it has been necessary for it to not *appear* extremist. As this entire dissertation tries to show, discourses become ‘successful’ by playing on the frameworks of the familiar and the ‘mainstream’. My overall attempt in the second part of the dissertation has been to do an extensive analysis of the *manner in which a particular kind of ‘common sense’ is being articulated around religious differences and national identity*.⁵

⁵It is important here to clarify (and qualify) my use of two concepts in this dissertation – ‘consensus’ and ‘hegemony’. In speaking of the existence of a “background consensus” that is being called into question

Dissertation Outline

Chapter two begins with surveying the variety of different responses in academia, official circles and the media, elicited by the global resurgence of religious nationalisms. Critiquing the kinds of explanations that analyze the rise of religious nationalisms as traditionalist ‘reactions to modernity’, the chapter argues that even though most religious nationalisms *present* themselves as ‘traditional’ responses to the ‘problems of modernity’, contemporary religious nationalisms remain linked to modernity in *integral* ways. In addition, the chapter also points to some of these enduring connections between contemporary religious nationalisms and a variety of modernist projects. The chapter also argues that many scholars who do recognize some modernizing aspects of contemporary religious nationalisms, nevertheless remain wedded to an (Orientalist) tradition/modernity binary in thinking of religion and politics in a third world/first world context.

Chapter three pushes the implications of this Orientalist thinking for describing the nature of “global conflict” in the contemporary world. The chapter argues that much of the post cold-war anxiety in the West on the global rise of religious nationalisms (the ‘new cold war’) converges on the ‘global threat of Islam’. In addition to looking at how a

and reworked through the “hegemonic” politics of Hindu nationalism, I do not mean to suggest that there has ever, or will ever, exist “complete agreement” on existing meanings and social understandings, or that the Hindu nationalist project is “totalizing” in its effects (even if it is in its intentions). Rather, I am speaking here of the attempt of Hindu nationalism to construct as “dominant” particular interpretations of reality (that serve particular interests), its hegemonic vision being realized only *to the extent* that it is able to secure consent from large groups of people (including those whose interests are *not* served by that project). In that sense, even though the hegemonic project of Hindu nationalism attempts to interpellate a variety of subject-positions under an overarching and exclusive ‘Hindu identity’ (as chapter seven most clearly shows), it still remains incomplete insofar as large numbers of people refuse to, and actively resist, being ‘hailed’ by it. While the dissertation looks more closely at the process through which this hegemonic project is constructed and disseminated, the issue of ‘resistance’ (that always accompanies hegemony)

movement like the Hindu nationalist movement in India (that also others Muslims) draws on this emerging global discourse on the “Islamic threat” to create its own localized version of the Islamic threat, the purpose of the chapter is also to problematize existing Orientalist dichotomies by exploring ‘the limits of Western secularism’. In particular, the chapter looks at how Western secularism has fared *in practice* in the face of the Islamic presence *within* Western European countries (especially Britain). Using the ‘Rushdie affair’ as a critical moment in the unsettling of British secularism, the chapter looks at how the ‘Islamic threat’ within Britain gets constituted in and through the responses to this episode.

Before embarking on the empirical section of the dissertation that looks at the negotiation of Indian national identity, **Chapter four** initiates a discussion on the ‘future of the nation-state’ in the face of a variety of globalizing and fragmenting forces that have led many to predict the impending demise of the nation-state form. Challenging such predictions, the chapter argues that the nation-state continues to be a salient and critical actor in global politics. Further, the chapter also shows how extant (academic, official, and popular) anxieties about the future of the nation-state are drawn upon and countered in the religious nationalist discourse of the BJP. As the chapter makes clear, it is not so much the future of the nation-state that requires interrogation, but how national identities are being reconstituted in the face of these different forces.

Chapter five inaugurates the first of three chapters on the rise of Hindu nationalism in India. The rearticulations that Hindu nationalism effects always have to draw on existing structures of meanings and practices, the available discursive pre-understandings, the existing forms of knowledge in society. The first part of chapter five

remains crucial (even if inadequately explored here)¹⁴

explores how the 'taken-for-granted' in much of contemporary political discourses on both the right and the left in India - that Hindus and Muslims exist as two distinct communities, with different identities and (and often conflicting) interests - is a consequence of particular historical and social circumstances, constructed through various forms of knowledge and practices of the colonial state as well as the emerging anti-colonial struggles of the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, even though the construction of religious communities and communalism can be traced in many ways to the colonial period, it is still the case that certain forms of divisions and antagonisms between religious communities exist now as institutionalized political facts. To an extent the post-colonial Indian state inherited certain mechanisms of governance from the colonial state that reproduced and exacerbated such divisions, and this is reflected in particular in the electoral politics of both Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. The second part of chapter five points to some of the key moments during Congress rule that intensified the communalisation of post-colonial Indian politics, and in a sense, created the ideological space for the rise and electoral success of the BJP.

Arguing that social categories are both historically and socially contextual, the next two chapters attempt to look at how widely accepted categories such as 'secularism' and the 'nation' took on a particular set of meanings in the context of post-colonial Indian national identity, and how those meanings are being transformed in the political, economic and cultural conditions of the late 20th century with the rise of Hindu nationalism. **Chapter six** locates this transformation within a larger structural context of the economic and social dislocations caused by failed developmentalist projects and late capitalism, and the new discontents generated through the more recent adoption of neoliberal economic policies by the Indian state in an increasingly globalized political

economy. In other words, the attempt in this chapter is to show how periods of significant economic, political and social changes provide the conditions in which (the always ongoing) negotiation of nationalist ideology becomes particularly salient.

Chapter seven looks at the renegotiation of national identity by examining extensively the *process* through which existing contemporary understandings of ‘secularism’ and its relation with the Indian ‘nation’ are being rearticulated in the Hindu nationalist discourse around an exclusivist Hindu/Muslim axis. It is in this chapter that I primarily explore how ‘meanings’ are being created and recreated through the cultural politics of Hindu nationalism. The chapter looks at the Hindu nationalist attempt to appropriate existing ideas of secularism, that resonate quite strongly with the self-understandings of middle-class, urban India, and give it quite a novel accent in its own version of ‘Indian secularism’. At the same time, the chapter looks at how a new common-sense is being constructed around what it means to be ‘Indian’ that disengages the existing articulation between religion and the nation, and draws on an essentialist and very problematic discourse of an inherently tolerant and inclusive Hinduism as the originary foundation of modern India.

Moving away from a contextual and close discursive reading of the Hindu nationalist position(s) in the previous three chapters, the purpose of **Chapter eight**, the concluding chapter, is to bring together several ‘instances’ from the cultural politics of Hindu nationalism as covered in the dissertation in order to reflect upon some of the critical conceptualizations that have premised the writing of this dissertation. In doing that, it attempts to re-link the latter half of the dissertation that looks specifically at Hindu nationalism with the earlier part of the dissertation. The first part of this dissertation drew out some of the ‘political implications’ of extant commentary on religious

nationalisms (the politics of epistemology), and the second part of the dissertation explored the 'political implications' of Hindu nationalism in India (the politics of ideology). Written in a deliberately polemical fashion, the concluding chapter teases out such political implications of religious nationalisms in more general terms.

Chapter Two

Religious Nationalisms, Secularism and the ‘Question of Modernity’

Introduction

The global resurgence of religious nationalisms has elicited a variety of different responses from scholars and commentators on world politics. In addition to the incredulity generated among (different faces of) modernization theorists, and the sense of alarm and foreboding on the impending “new cold war”, some of the most interesting questions have centered around the relationship between religious nationalisms and the global project of modernity. Critiquing the kinds of explanations that analyze the rise of religious nationalisms as traditionalist reactions to modernity (termed ‘reactive explanations’ in this chapter), this chapter argues that even though most religious nationalisms *present* themselves as ‘traditional’ responses to the ‘problems of modernity’, contemporary religious nationalisms remain linked to modernity in *integral* ways. I argue further that many scholars who recognize some modernizing aspects of contemporary religious nationalisms, nevertheless remain wedded to the tradition/modernity binary in thinking of religion and politics in a third world/first world context. In the next chapter, I push the implications of this Orientalist thinking for describing the nature of “global conflict” in the contemporary world. I will argue that much of the post cold-war anxiety in the West on the global rise of religious nationalisms converges on the fear of growing Islamic movements worldwide. I argue further that the “reality” of this emerging discourse (regardless of its “truth value” or “accuracy” of description and prescription) has political implications for the rise of religious

nationalisms worldwide. On the one hand, such thinking creates the danger of polarizing the world around its predicted categories by generating certain kinds of anxieties and responses from the “West” and the “Islamic World”. The “Rushdie affair” in Britain demonstrated in a stark way this process of the ‘othering’ of Muslims in the West, and the response of Muslims to it. On the other hand, I also show how a movement like the Hindu nationalist movement in India (that also others Muslims) draws on this emerging global discourse on the “Islamic threat” to create its own localized version of this threat.

The latter part of this chapter explores the various aspects of the complex interconnections between the worldwide rise of religious nationalisms, and the global project of modernity. In particular, I look at four aspects – how contemporary religious nationalisms are ‘imagined’ through the use of modern technology; the ‘construction’ of religions, religious communities and religious identities through various modernist practices; the link of contemporary religious movements to the ‘nation-state’ project; and religious nationalisms as an aspect of, and response to ‘globalization’. Even though I hint at some of the arguments here, I will analyze more specifically and in detail, the relationship between the rise of Hindu nationalism and colonial and postcolonial modernist projects in later chapters.

Responses to the ‘Global’ Resurgence of Religious Nationalisms

At a certain level, it seems clear that religion is back in the reckoning in international politics. New editions of world politics textbooks have found it necessary to add chapters and sections on religion and nationalism. It seems as though the empirical reality of the worldwide resurgence of religion in politics can hardly be overlooked any

more. The rising influence of the Christian Right in the United States, the growth of Evangelical and Pentecostal movements in Latin America with various ties to U.S. political interests, the different varieties of Islamist movements in the Middle East, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of South-East Asia, the religionization of the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the increasing influence of the Orthodox Church in post-communist Russia, the foray of Hindu nationalism in mainstream politics in India, the politicization of Buddhism in the anti-Tamil Sinhalese politics of Sri Lanka as well as in Myanmar are just a few prominent examples in a much longer list. This empirical reality led the MacArthur Foundation to fund an enormous six-year American Academy of Arts and Sciences project, called The Fundamentalism Project, out of which five volumes of encyclopedic lengths on a number of empirical studies of religious movements in different parts of the world have been produced.¹ How have scholars and journalists thinking and writing on this subject responded to this phenomenon? What kinds of questions are being raised about the role of religion in contemporary international politics?

Secularism and Modernization

At one level, there is a certain amount of incredulity associated with the observation that “religion is back”. Much of social theory based on the modern narrative

¹ See Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), Fundamentalisms Observed, (Vol. 1) University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991; Fundamentalisms and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family, and Education (Vol. 2) , University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993; Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies, and Militance , (Vol. 3) University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993; Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements, (Vol. 4) University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1994; Fundamentalisms Comprehended, (Vol. 5) University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995. Even though the project claims to be global in scope, the emphasis on the Middle East across the volumes is unmistakable.

of progress and reason, whether liberal or Marxist, premised itself on the inevitability of the regression of religion from public/political life. If the Enlightenment principle of secularism that banishes religion away from the public realm of politics had never been as firmly entrenched as expected even in the Western liberal democracies where it took root, many expected this to be a sign of an incomplete modernity that had not fully blossomed worldwide.

“Sociological theory based on the notion of the one-way trajectory is modified only to the extent of admitting that special conditions may *delay* the death of religion. Death may be postponed but not averted. Or, alternatively, sociological theory locates the key element in the one-way trajectory not as outright extinction, but as a marginalization whereby religion is ‘no more’ than a leisure time pursuit.”²

The presence of religion in public-political life was dismissed as residual vestiges or isolated reactionary responses. For instance, most early works on political development found religion to be an “obstacle” to modernization and expected secularization of the modern state to be a prerequisite and hence inevitable, in the process of modernization and development.³ But the recent intensification of religious passions, both in the East and the West, have led scholars to increasingly question the *inevitability* of

² David Martin, “The secularization issue: prospect and retrospect”, in The British Journal of Sociology, Vol. no. 42, Issue no. 3, September 1991, 465-474: pp. 467

³ See Donald Eugene Smith, Religion and Political Development, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1970 for one of the most systematic comparative accounts of the process of secularization that accompanies the process of political development in the course of modernization. Smith draws on the work of scholars like Lucian Pye and Gabriel Almond who posited that differentiation and specialization of social and political spheres was a prerequisite for modernization and development, which leads to the assumption that “religion is in general an obstacle to modernization”. (Smith, pp. xi) In the face of the contemporary surge of religious movements, Smith continues to emphasize the “limits” of religious resurgences, claiming that the contemporary reality is less of a generalized religious resurgence, and more a part of a cyclical movement that will eventually witness a downswing. (See Donald Eugene Smith, “The Limits of Religious Resurgence”, in Emile Sahliyeh, Religious Resurgence and Politics in the Contemporary World, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1990) For a brief and general survey of the literature on political development, and in particular for an account of the diminishing role of religion in modernization theory,

secularization. This questioning is particularly marked within the discipline of sociology where scholars have been critiquing the ‘Secularization Thesis’ – that posited that in the progressive unfolding of modern history, secularization was to be an accompaniment of modernization.⁴ In general, to the extent that these different varieties of modernization theories were premised on the expectation of progressive secularization, the resurgence of religious passions and the increasing intensity of religio-political demands has been met with some degree of surprise.

The “New Cold War”

At another level, and particularly marked within accounts of international politics, are those who ask whether the rise of religious nationalisms constitutes a new source of

see Robert Wuthnow, “Understanding Religion and Politics”, in *Daedalus*, Vol. 120, No.3, Summer 1991: 1-20. See especially pp. 2-5.

⁴ For a well known early statement of secularization theory within sociology see Peter Berger, The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion, Doubleday & Company, Garden City, New York, 1967. Related to his work (with Thomas Luckmann) on the social construction of reality, Berger argued that religion as a type of overarching symbolic universe (a meaning-system) can provide integration, legitimation and most importantly, meaning, to the chaos, complexity, tragedy, injustice and uncertainty of “everyday reality”. Yet, he argues, that as modern (industrial capitalist) society became structurally differentiated and rationalized, it set in motion an irreversible process of secularization (both at the level of consciousness or “subjective secularization” and at the social-structural level or “objective secularization”). Further secularization also sets in motion “pluralism” (or “demonopolization”) and the competitiveness of the market leads to the “bureaucratic rationalization” and commodification of religions, which in its turn contributes to the “crisis of credibility” of religions in modern societies as the authority of established religions to provide integration, legitimation and meaning declines. For a good overview and critique of Berger’s views on religion and secularization, see Robert Wuthnow, “Religion as Sacred Canopy” and Phillip E. Hammond, “Religion in the Modern World”, in James Davison Hunter and Stephen C. Ainsley (ed.), Making Sense of Modern Times: Peter L. Berger and the Vision of Interpretive Sociology. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London: 1986. But more recently, Berger has himself come to question his earlier work, arguing now that the secularization theory to which he himself contributed, was “essentially mistaken”. See for instance, Peter L. Berger, “Secularism in Retreat”, The National Interest, Winter 1996/97: 3-12. See Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe (ed.), Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered, Paragon House, New York, 1989 for a very good collection of essays that question secularization theory from several different perspectives. For a review of theories of secularization, see Jose Casanova, “The Politics of the Religious Revival,” in Telos, 59, Spring 1984. For an early critique of the secularization thesis based on the persistence of American religiosity, see Andrew M. Greeley, Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion. Schocken Books, New York, 1972. For an attempt to rework secularization theory in the light of

conflict in the post-cold war world. The most prominent here of course is Samuel Huntington's work on the rise of civilizational conflicts, in which notwithstanding the confusing array of markers used to designate civilizational boundaries, religious conflict (and in particular the division between the Islamic world and the Christian West) receives clear prominence of place.⁵ But this is a question that is raised by several other journalists and scholars, writing at different levels of theoretical sophistication and from different political positions. But what is most interesting about much of these analyses is that even though the conflict is often presented as that between secular vs. religious nationalism, the analyses often slide into a tendency to congeal around the 'threat of Islam'. For instance, whether the rise of religious nationalisms portends a new source of global, binary conflict is also raised in Mark Juergensmeyer's book The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State, albeit with considerably more nuance than Huntington.⁶ Juergensmeyer envisions the possibility of a new cold war in the future which like the old cold war would be "global in its scope, binary in its opposition, occasionally violent, and essentially a difference of ideologies".⁷ This opposition would be between what he at different places describes as "new forms of culture-based politics and the secular state"⁸ and "religion in its various forms, and the European and American

religious resurgences, see Mark Chaves, "Secularization as Declining Religious Authority", Social Forces, 72(3), March 1994: 749-774.

⁵ Huntington's article was clearly an attempt to substitute the old cold war paradigm with a new post-cold war one. In his words, "Civilizations are the natural successor to the three worlds of the Cold War.", "Discussion", Foreign Affairs, 72, November-December 1993, 186-194: pp. 187.

⁶ Mark Juergensmeyer, The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993.

⁷ ibid., pp. 2

⁸ ibid., pp. 2

model of secular nationalism”⁹, but in a telling phrase gives away that it is “the West (now aligned with the secular leaders of the Soviet Union) (that) confronts (this) opposition”.¹⁰ By the end of the book, this opposition is much clearer as Juergensmeyer writes “(o)ne can foresee the emergence of a united religious bloc stretching from Central and South Asia through the Middle East to Africa. With an arsenal of nuclear weapons at its disposal and fueled by American fear of Islam, it might well replace the old Soviet Union as a united global enemy of the secular West.”¹¹ Like Huntington, Juergensmeyer also approaches this topic from a clearly Western perspective, but unlike Huntington’s much more defined prognosis for the future and the call for security preparedness in the face of such perceived threats to the West, Juergensmeyer leaves the question a little more open and calls for increased empathy and understanding to prevent the possibility of a new cold war along religious lines. But to reiterate, despite such differences, there is an interesting (and disturbing) tendency of analyses that find in the rise of religious nationalisms a new source of global, binary conflict to congeal around the “threat of Islam”.¹² I will speak more to the Orientalist assumptions undergirding this tendency, and its implications for global peace and security, in the next chapter.

⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 7

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 2

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 201. In the very next paragraph, Juergensmeyer goes on to add that ‘(s)uch a conflict might be compounded by the rise of new religious radicals in Europe and the United States, including not only politically active Christians but also members of newly immigrant communities of Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs who might support their comrades at home. A nascent cult of cultural nationalists in Japan and elsewhere in the Far East might also be in league with what could become the West’s new foe.’ (*ibid.*, pp. 201) It is still interesting that all these “religious radicals”, regardless of where they are located, would be the “*West’s* new foe”.

¹² Why this rise of religious nationalisms might take a cold-war form is less thoroughly analyzed by most scholars who point to the emergence of a new cold war along religious nationalist lines. At one level, some scholars seem to think that the end of the cold war has lifted a lid of repressed sensibilities that would generate new (religious) conflicts.

Finally, I would like to turn to the questions that the global resurgence of religious nationalisms has raised with respect to the issue of 'modernity'. Much as this resurgence has unsettled the acceptance of the inevitability of secularization, commentators have struggled with the implications of the 'anti-modernist' thrusts of religious movements to the progress of modernity. In the next section, I turn to explore some of the complicated issues that the rise of religious nationalisms has raised with respect to modernity by examining how the rise of religious nationalisms has been 'explained' in the literature.

Explaining Religious Nationalisms: 'Reactive Explanations'

A large bulk of the literature on religious nationalisms is premised to a large degree on a pejorative and unproblematic construction of such nationalisms as "anti-

"As old ideologies such as Soviet communism imploded, people in the West often called into question the rationalism of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, with whose worldview they had been living. Citizens of the poor world, progressively free of colonialism, were also free to seek new patterns of meaning, often in religious renewals." (Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Religion, Ethnicity, and Self-Identity*. University Press of New England, Hanover, 1997: pp. 2)

Or in the words of Juergensmeyer,

"It is no mystery why religious nationalism has become so popular at this moment in history. In times of social turbulence and political confusion – which the collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of American economic power and cultural influence have created around the world – new panaceas abound. It was inevitable that many of these would involve religion, sometimes perceived as the only stable point in a swirl of economic and political indirection. Moreover, as nations rejected the Soviet and American models of nationhood, they turned to their own pasts and to their own cultural resources." (Juergensmeyer, 1993: pp. 194)

But why such conflicts might congeal into a binary, rather than dissipate into anarchy (along the lines of John Mearsheimer's argument that predicted the end of the cold war to lead to an anarchic phase of factionalism and sectarian strifes, at least in Europe; see John J. Mearsheimer, "Why We Will Soon Miss the Cold War", in *The Atlantic*, 266, no. 2, August 1990, 35-50) is less clear. Sometimes, there seems to be an implicit assumption that one binary is always replaced by another. Raymond Grew points out that fundamentalisms may have actually "benefited from the effects of the cold war" in that regard.

"Capitalist and communist parties not only taught the world the techniques of mass demonstrations, effective organization, and propaganda but showed how all public issues can be related to a basic schism...dichotomous thinking became less alien and more respectable as it became more common among elites and in general discourse, offering fundamentalist arguments a more comfortable environment." (Raymond Grew, "On

modern” or “reactionary” (reaction to modernity). Even though it is generally recognized that many such movements are quite adept at the *instrumental use* of modernity, especially the use of modern technology, religious nationalists are generally seen as anti or pre-modern (or the “irrational” and the “mad” among us who are trying to roll back the progress of history).

In the five mega volumes of The Fundamentalism Project, Marty and Appleby quite consistently find the central substantive similarity among the various movements covered in the project as “reactive”, described at different places as “*reaction* to secular modernity”¹³, *reacting* against “the erosion of traditional society and fighting back against the encroachments of secular modernity”¹⁴, being “religiously inspired *reaction* to aspects of the global processes of modernization and secularization in the twentieth century,” etc.¹⁵ But more specifically, what are the particular aspects of modernity and modernization that these movements are reacting to or against? The editors find that fundamentalisms have to be understood as responses to certain aspects of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries – an “unstable era of rapid urbanization, modernization and uneven rates of development with the withdrawal of Western colonial forces from the third world”, the “vulnerability to totalitarian dictators and military regimes”, the “social and economic dislocation and deprivation upon migration to the

Seeking the Cultural Context of Fundamentalism”, in Marty and Appleby (ed.), 1997: pp. 27-28)

¹³ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “Introduction”, in Marty and Appleby (eds.), Accounting for Fundamentalisms: The Dynamic Character of Movements, (Vol. 4), 1994: pp. 5

¹⁴ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “Introduction”, in Marty and Appleby (eds.), Fundamentalisms Comprehended, (Vol. 5), 1995: pp. 6

¹⁵ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “Introduction: A Sacred Cosmos, Scandalous Code, Defiant Society”, in Marty and Appleby (eds.), Fundamentalisms and Society: Reclaiming the Sciences, the Family, and Education (Vol. 2), 1993: pp. 2

cities”, the “conditions of misery and exploitation experienced by millions of subject peoples” the “anonymity of city life”, the “weakening of traditional social controls”, the “absence of familiar community values”. In their words, “...these conditions of upheaval and disorientation have provided an opening, an undeniable aggregate need, for alternative philosophies, structures, and institutions that would retain certain traditional values even as they reflected adjustments to the potentially overwhelming pace and shape of change.”¹⁶ Or as they point out in another place “...religious fundamentalisms thrive in the twentieth century when and where masses of people living in formerly traditional societies experience profound personal and social dislocations as a result of rapid modernization and in the absence of mediating institutions capable of meeting the human needs created by these dislocations.”¹⁷ Similarly, Emile Sahliyah, in concluding her introductory chapter on global religious resurgences says that “(t) social upheaval and economic dislocation that were associated with modernization led to this renewal of traditional religions.”¹⁸ In general, in such accounts, religious nationalisms are presented

¹⁶ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “Conclusion: An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family”, in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), Fundamentalisms Observed, (Vol. 1), 1991: pp. 823

¹⁷ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “Conclusion: Remaking the State: The Limits of the Fundamentalist Imagination” in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, Fundamentalisms and the State, (Vol. 3), 1993: pp. 620. I would like to point out though that as far as these different volumes of The Fundamentalism Project are concerned, this is less a critique of individual chapters, some of which are quite theoretically sophisticated, but more of the overall theoretical framework within which the project is situated, as laid out in the editorial commentaries in each of the volumes.

¹⁸ Emile Sahliyah, “Religious Resurgence and Political Modernization” in Emile Sahliyah (ed.), Religious Resurgence and Politics in the Contemporary World. State University of New York Press, Albany, 1990: pp. 16. It is interesting that an account such as Emile Sahliyah’s that attempts to correct such reactive explanations doesn’t seem to move significantly beyond that framework. Sahliyah proposes “to advance a more sophisticated explanation to the phenomenon of religious resurgence”, by moving “beyond viewing religious renewal as being primarily a response to grievances and deprivations.” (pp. 300). The combination of four factors that she lists as part of this explanatory framework include (1)the failure of secular ideologies to provide solutions to socioeconomic and political problems (2)the uneven impact of economic modernization within and among third world countries in exacerbating poverty, unemployment, etc. (3)outside threats to group identity and political integrity and (4)the availability of organizational resources for effective mobilization. (See her “Religious Resurgence and Political Modernization” and

as (traditionalist) reactions to the dislocations and alienations of modernity. It is this mode of explanation that I term “reactive explanations” in this chapter.¹⁹

The Orientalism of ‘Reactive Explanations’

To understand religious nationalisms as simply ‘reactive’ is problematic for a number of reasons. At a certain level, these kinds of explanations derive too literally from the rhetoric of such movements, and can be too easily dismissive of the particular and complicated challenges posed by them. But even more importantly, such explanations often tend to slide into Orientalist dichotomies that end up connecting two binaries – first world/third world (or West/East) with secularism/fundamentalism – which leads to the problematic and untenable opposition between ‘Western Secularism’ and ‘Eastern Fundamentalism’.²⁰ It is interesting for instance that even though the fundamentalist project attempts to cover a variety of different empirical case studies spanning several different geographical areas, the theoretical overviews that attempt to analyze ‘fundamentalisms’ as ‘reactions’ to modernity seem to focus almost exclusively

“Concluding Remarks”) The first three in the list clearly seem part of a reactive explanation and the fourth does not significantly move us beyond that level by focussing almost entirely on an instrumental use of modernity.

¹⁹ The reactive nature of such explanations is also evidenced to a degree in the definitions of modernity in such analyses. The question of “what is modernity” is rarely, if ever, addressed in most studies of religious nationalisms. For Marty and Appleby, “modernity” by default is whatever fundamentalists claim to oppose. Hence “(w)hoever listens to the rhetoric of the ayatollahs, rabbis, priests, and pastors who call attention to religion and who often exploit it, “modernity” is a kind of code word for any of the erosive forces that threaten self-identity.” (Marty and Appleby, 1997: pp. 9) or “...“modern” is a code word for the set of forces which fundamentalists perceive as the threat which inspires their reaction..” (Marty and Appleby, 1991: pp. vii) It is interesting that in introducing the first volume the editors clarify that (m)odern cultures include at least three dimensions uncongenial to fundamentalists: a preference for secular rationality; the adoption of religious tolerance with accompanying tendencies toward relativism; and individualism.” (Marty and Appleby, 1991: pp. vii) Yet, these three aspects do not receive much theoretical explication in the rest of the volumes.

on the third world. It seems almost as though that notwithstanding the editors' attempts to think of fundamentalisms as a global issue, their theoretical presuppositions as to the connected binaries of the traditional/modern and third world/first world creep into their analysis. For if indeed religious nationalisms are a reaction to modernity, and modernity is a characteristic primarily of (and from) the West (as the editors do seem to think), then such movements should perhaps emerge more 'naturally' and more widely in the West.²¹ Yet, the bulk of the empirical studies in the project are from the third world, most notably the Middle East.²² Hence, religious nationalisms insofar as they exist in the West become *peripheral* to Western modernity, and *essential* (in a pejorative sense) to the East.²³

Further, it seems curious in that light that despite this focus on the third world, the editors of the fundamentalism project pay much less explicit *theoretical attention* to 'postcoloniality'. For if religious nationalisms are to be understood as "anti-modern", the

²⁰ My use of the concept of 'Orientalism' is drawn from Edward Said's groundbreaking work on the construction of 'the East' through the representational devices of Western canonical literature. See Edward Said, Orientalism, Vintage Books, New York, 1979

²¹ I would like to point out here that regardless of the genealogies and historical origins of particular modernist projects, I find the conflation of 'modernity' with the 'West' problematic. Here I find Eric Wolf's monumental work on the study of modern (capitalist) history through understanding the mutual encounters of the European and non-European worlds (without erasing questions of power) quite illuminating. See Eric R. Wolf, Europe and the People Without History, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997. Exploring the contemporary resurgence of Islam worldwide in the context of globalization, Pasha and Samatar also emphasize the need to move away from Eurocentrism by locating the place of Islam in the "coconstruction of globality". In other words, my own analysis is sympathetic to understanding modernity as global, shaped by a variety of different interactions in different parts of the world, but influenced by multiple and overlapping levels (from local to global) of power hierarchies. See Mustapha Kamal Pasha and Ahmed I. Samatar, "The Resurgence of Islam", in James H. Mittelman (ed.), Globalization: Critical Reflections, Lynne Rienner, Boulder, 1997.

²² While many works on global religious nationalisms tend to focus overwhelmingly on the Middle East, David Westerlund attempts to redress the balance by bringing together articles that look at the rise of religious nationalisms in North and Central America, Europe, Africa and Asia. Yet, it is interesting to see that the authors of the different articles in the book often get caught up in the attempt to differentiate Christian fundamentalism from anti-secularist movements in other religions. (See David Westerlund (ed.) Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1996.)

articulation of modernity with postcoloniality is critical in understanding both the emergence and the appeal of such nationalisms in the third world. Religion is often the site that provides the symbolic and mythic resources for the construction of 'tradition', and if modernity-as-colonialism is to be opposed, religion often proves invaluable in that opposition. Like Marty and Appleby, Ashis Nandy also finds the force of religious nationalisms in South Asian politics in the displacement and alienation that have followed the industrialization and urbanization of "mega-development" in India. In this scenario, Nandy points out, religions provide the "metaphor of continuity" that become "potent myths" in politics.²⁴ This metaphor of continuity, in other words, is a postcolonial means of recuperating a (continuous) tradition in the face of a (disjunctive) modernity. In one of the chapters on India, I show how the anxieties and dislocations generated by globalization and economic liberalization have created the 'conditions of possibility' for the appeal of the culturalist discourse of the BJP that provides this kind of "metaphor of continuity". Yet, these conditions of possibility don't provide an adequate 'explanation' of the success of the BJP without understanding the discursive mechanisms through which the party balances the ambivalences that emerge from the contradictory desires for 'mimicry' and 'authenticity' that are a fundamental aspect of the postcolonial condition. Inevitably, such 'reactions' remain connected to the modernist project in numerous ways, even as they react to modernity. In other words, the use of religion-as-tradition cannot be understood without analyzing the complications of such 'reactions'.

²³ Even a book such as Mark Juergensmeyer's that pays close attention to the self-descriptions of religious nationalists in the third world, and is conscious of the many modernist aspects of such movements, ultimately remains wedded to this *Secularist/Fundamentalist – East/West* dichotomy.

²⁴ Ashis Nandy, "Themes of Exile: The Uprooted in South Asian Politics" in the Times of India, September 19, 1996.

Journalistic commentary on third world religious nationalisms also reflect this East/West dichotomy. For instance, the destruction of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 in Ayodhya in Northwest India brought Hindu nationalism into the Western media with a new prominence. This new shift in focus of the spatial location of “fundamentalism” from the Middle East to India nonetheless continued to be framed within an Orientalist framework in which the non-Western world remained temporally behind Western modernity. Hence articles in the New York Times, as well as informed pieces by scholars of the Indian subcontinent such as Stanley Wolpert, pointed to “centuries-old religious hatreds” and “ancient conflicts between Hindus and Muslims” triggering a “resurgent Hindu fundamentalism” that has always encountered a “militant Islam”, making it possible now to frame events in India as “Holy war in India”.²⁵ In this framework, ‘fundamentalism’ in India (and elsewhere), becomes the other of Western ‘secularism’, so that the rise of Hindu nationalism in contemporary India is bemoaned as a threat to (progressive) modernity, and by extension in an argument such as Huntington's as an emerging threat to the Western (Christian, but secular!) world. It is such orientalist readings that make Indian democracy seem as “failed experiments” in contrast to an idealized Western reality, and Indian communalism seem as “failed nationalism”.²⁶ As Said points out about Orientalism, such constructions say more about the Western self than the Third World.

²⁵ See for e.g. Edward A. Gargan, “Savage Intolerance: Fundamentalism in South Asia isn’t all Islam”, in New York Times, Dec 13, 1992; Stanley Wolpert, “Resurgent Hindu Fundamentalism”, in Contention, 2, no. 3, Spring 1993. Islam, of course, continues to receive this kind of journalistic treatment. Coverage of the rising success of Islamic forces in Algeria for example brought forth a similar response from the Western media. More on this in the next chapter.

²⁶ See Lele, “Orientalism and the Social Sciences” and Peter van der Veer, “The Foreign Hand: Orientalist Discourse in Sociology and Communalism” in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (ed.), Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspective on South Asia, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993.

Rethinking Secularism

There are at least two intellectual failures that result from this tendency of ‘reactive explanations’ and other popular commentary to cohere around an East/West axis that I would like to point to here. First, such analyses fail to take into account the “limits of Western secularism”, accepting relatively unproblematically the ‘formal’ separation of religion and politics in secularism. In the next chapter, I would like to point to some of the uneasy articulations of religion and politics within Western societies (and its place within Western modernity), and in the process unsettle some of the problematic assumptions of Orientalist dichotomies. In that chapter, I will show how religion continues to frame political culture within secular democracies, and how in particular the presence of postcolonial religious minorities in Western Europe has tested the limits of Western religious and political tolerance.

Second, such analyses also fail to take account of the various forms of secularism that do exist in the non-West. The articulation of secularism with modernity and the attempted universalization of the project of modernity has meant that secularism has come to enjoy a relatively wide acceptance globally as a principle of good government. In the post-colonial world, the articulation of secularism with the modern nation-state reflects some of the contradictions of a “derivative nationalism”.²⁷ Hence this articulation of secularism with (progressive) modernity has created a certain ambivalence with respect to the idea even amongst those who would otherwise reject it for its

²⁷ See Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1986.

colonialist and Western associations.²⁸ As we will see in a later chapter, the Hindu nationalist position on secularism reflects this ambivalence. Given the resonance of secularism among the Indian middle classes, even the BJP cannot forsake the claim to secularism without impairing its political image. It is not possible to understand the Hindu nationalist agenda without understanding secularism as an *essential* part of the Indian political vocabulary, and examining the meanings that attach to that category in that particular context. In other words, I am arguing that accounts of religious nationalisms that remained framed by Orientalist dichotomies fail to theorize secularism in terms of the existing meanings and articulations between religion and politics as it exists within different socio-historic contexts, and hence provide inadequate explanations of such phenomena. This dissertation is an attempt to provide an explanation for the rise of religious nationalisms by moving beyond such formalistic accounts of secularism.

Finally, if indeed religious nationalisms are anti-modern and based on a rejection of modernity, then there is a puzzle in the case of the Hindu nationalist movement in India. The puzzle is: *Why does the Bharatiya Janata Party, which clearly presents itself as the voice of 'tradition' (in the face of 'modernity') so popular and successful among the urban, upper-caste, upwardly mobile, middle and upper classes – the groups that if one were to apply the tradition-modern categories to India, would be considered the most modern groups (the most comfortable with, and advantaged by, modernity) in the*

²⁸ One of the political implications of analyses that end up constructing a Western Secularism/Eastern Fundamentalism opposition is that it creates the basis for the easy rejection of secularism in the postcolonial world as 'alien' and 'imperialist'. In a later chapter, I will show how that does happen with one version of Indian secularism. For many religious nationalists in the postcolonial world, secularism can be rejected less for its substantive content and more for its association with 'Euro-Christianity'.

country?²⁹ To answer that puzzle, and to develop a richer understanding of religious nationalisms, it seems to me that it is important to move beyond ‘reactive explanations’ to explore the complex interconnections of such movements with modernity.

Interconnections with Modernity

The idea and practice of secularism has no doubt been quite closely associated with the project of modernity. Yet the binary dichotomy between secularism/fundamentalism used to frame the modern/pre-modern dichotomy remains problematic, not simply because it constructs an orientalist Western/non-Western (First world/Third world) framework, but because it also fails to acknowledge that forms of religious nationalisms in the contemporary world remain linked to modernity and the project of modernity in intricate ways. Rather than see religious nationalisms either as the sign of an incomplete modernity, or a simple reaction to modernity, it is important to examine how they remain connected (integrally, and not peripherally) to various aspects of modernity, and that despite the invocation of ‘tradition’ by most such movements. The argument that I am making is that religious nationalisms are not simply responses to

²⁹ Chapter six will point to the details of the BJP’s support base. It should be noted here that one of the most stable support groups of Hindu nationalist parties in India has been the lower middle-income, small business and merchant class in Northern India. I am not claiming here that all religious movements are in general supported by the “more modern” classes within a country. Political parties such as the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria and the Welfare Party in Turkey have been popularly supported by underrepresented, deprived and conventionally understood as “more traditional”, groups in those countries (but also, particularly in the case of the latter, by the Western-educated groups in the country). The religious nationalism of the Sikhs in India was also more popular among the generally more deprived sections of Sikh society in India. As my dissertation emphasizes, understanding any particular religious nationalist movement requires an analysis of the particular socio-historical context in which it arises. However, the BJP pattern is not at all uncommon. Further, I would venture to add, the question of modernity still remains centrally linked to most contemporary religious nationalisms, notwithstanding their different kinds of support bases. In a different variant of the puzzle, it is interesting to note that that United States, often considered the exemplar of modernity and development, has consistently shown the highest levels of religiosity, socially and politically, among all first world countries.

modernity, which they are to an extent. In both colonial and post-colonial situations, religion has often been the site on which resistances to colonialism and modernity have been offered. In the contemporary world, religious responses to the 'evils' of modern life are common in both the first and the third world. Further, as I elaborate on below, contemporary religious movements freely use many of the 'instrumentalities' of modernity, even as they critique the consequences of modernity. But much more importantly, and much less recognized, it is also the case that such nationalisms draw sustenance from different projects of modernity (such as the nation-state) and link themselves to them, thrive within modernity and in response to it, even as they often make use of the same dichotomy, claiming and celebrating the *very same* "tradition" that orientalist writing denigrates.³⁰ In other words, modernity not only makes possible, but is in many ways *constitutive* of the kinds of religious nationalisms like the ones in India.

In critiquing accounts of religious nationalisms that emphasize the "resurgence" aspect of such movements, and pointing out that religion has always fulfilled that role, Jeff Haynes says, "...the key to understanding the contemporary socio-political role of religion...is that it regularly furnishes the resources for groups to try to *deal with the stresses of modernization*."³¹ My contention is that religious resources not just allow groups to deal with the stresses of modernity, but also in one sense, enable groups *to be*

³⁰ In other words, I am arguing that 'tradition' itself does not exist unproblematically to be 'claimed' by religious nationalists, but is in many ways itself the product of modernity. What myths, values, customs, knowledges get projected as 'traditional' come out of the exigencies of any particular socio-historic context. See for example, E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (ed.), The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1983

³¹ Jeff Haynes, "Conclusion", in Jeff Haynes (ed.) Religion, Globalization and Political Culture in the Third World. St. Martin's Press, New York, 1999: pp. 243, my italics. Haynes contends that religious movements have sometimes "adapted" to the inevitability of modernity, but seems to reserve this badge of approval for mainly Catholic groups, and believes that "Islamist movements in the main have difficulties in

modern, even as modernity is forsaken in name. The construction of an “Indian identity” (in the name of ‘tradition’) without forsaking the interests of global capitalism, that appeals to the modernist (material and symbolic) aspirations of middle-class India explains much of the BJP’s popularity. As I show in chapter six, speaking simultaneously to the anxieties of modernization and the desire for modernity, the BJP enables Indians to “be modern on Indian terms”.

It seems to me then that it is more fruitful to look at the resurgence of religion in politics less as a disjuncture (with modernity), and more as arising from particular and historical articulations of religion and politics. To move beyond ‘reactive explanations’ requires an *analysis* of the rhetoric of contemporary religious nationalisms in the context of the existing sets of meanings and self-understandings (that are constituted by modernity) in any particular socio-historic context.³² The rest of this chapter will

coming to terms with key modern institutions such as liberal democracy, religious pluralism and the market economy”. (See especially pp. 253)

³² But even if one was to simply look at the rhetoric of religious nationalisms globally, what tenable basis could one find for a cross-cultural framework that spans the East-West dichotomy? At a basic and obvious level, the rhetoric of religious nationalisms clearly sets itself in terms of the tradition/modernity dichotomy. Regardless of the complexity of the relation of such movements to different aspects of modernity, the appeal of this rhetorical move still needs to be taken seriously. This requires an examination of at least two different issues. First, one needs to interrogate the ‘condition’ of modern life that religious nationalists respond to. Second, one needs to examine the ‘nature’ of the response that religious nationalisms embody, or what do such movements offer *to* the ‘condition of modern life’. If one was to look for a common source of appeal in the anti-modernist rhetoric of religious nationalisms that could span the East/West dichotomy, it could perhaps be located at two levels. On the one hand, and at a more individualist level, is the attempt of religious nationalisms to restore “meaning” to life in the face of the spiritual alienation of modern, materialist life. On the other hand, and at a more societal level, is the attempt of religious nationalisms to speak to the need for “community” in the face of the individuation and alienation of modern capitalist society. (See for example Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, “Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society”, in Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (ed.), Transnational Religion and Fading States, Westview Press, Boulder, 1997: pp. 1-5) Both the ‘spiritual meanings’ and the ‘constructions of community’ that many such religious nationalisms offer can be deeply troublesome, and the material/spiritual and individual/social binaries that they base themselves on quite problematic. This is as true for the case of India as I show in a later chapter, as it is for the growing Evangelical movements in the U.S. But the effectiveness of their appeal lies precisely in speaking to aspects of the modern condition on those terms. In other words, I am not dismissing the rhetorical value of the “anti-modernism” that most religious nationalisms offer (and the generalizations that can be drawn on that basis), but arguing for an

highlight some of the complex interconnections of religious nationalisms with different aspects of modernity in relatively general terms. These interconnections will be more clearly and contextually developed in the later chapters on India. Chapter five and seven in particular will analyze how the discourse of Hindu nationalism in India effects change through working on existing sets of meanings and understandings.

Modern Instrumentalities

If there is one facet of modernity that is widely recognized in the literature on religious nationalisms, it is that most contemporary religious nationalisms are quite generous in their use of modern technology. As the editors of The Fundamentalism Project point out, that despite their critique of modernity, in the strategies and methods that the leaders of these movements use, they demonstrate “*a shrewd exploitation of its processes and instrumentalities.*”³³ The empirical chapters in the project quite consistently document the extensive use of mass communications technology – print media, radio, television, audio and video cassettes, and more recently, the internet. Even though my empirical chapters on India focus on the substantive message of Hindu nationalist discourse in India, the success of the BJP and its affiliated organizations in spreading this message has been determined to a large extent by its methods and strategies of dissemination, which has included a very cunning use of modern media. Of all political parties in India, the BJP has been the most effective in using modern

analysis of that rhetoric in terms of existing socio-historical circumstances that demonstrates the existing connections with modernity (and more adequately explains their appeal and success).

³³ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, “Conclusion: An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family”, in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, Fundamentalisms Observed, (vol. 1), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991: pp. 827

technology, particularly audio and video cassettes carried by motor vehicles, in reaching large sections of urban and rural India. This use of media technology has also been extremely successful in reaching diasporic Hindu Indians, particularly in the U.S. and Western Europe.³⁴ Raymond Grew points to some of the other developments since World War II that have made religious communities easier to establish, such as the development of more effective techniques of recruitment and mobilization, the ease of organization in formally structured urban life, the easier transference of money, information and equipment in modern societies, etc.³⁵ Some of this explains the popularity of religious nationalisms among a large section of the Western-style educated people in many third world countries, such as Turkey, Egypt and India.

What I would particularly like to highlight in this modern use of technology is not so much the *instrumentality* of this use (i.e. ‘using modernity’ to go back to ‘tradition’, as in reactive explanations), but technology as *making possible* the imagination of religious communities (akin to Ben Anderson’s conceptualization of the nation as an imagined

³⁴ The BJP web page (www.bjp.org) is extremely well-done, technologically as well as aesthetically, and frequented by a very large number of diasporic Hindu Indians.

³⁵ Raymond Grew, “On Seeking the Cultural Context of Fundamentalism”, in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), *Religion, Ethnicity, and Self-Identity: Nations in Turmoil*, United Press of New England, Hanover, 1997 (See especially pp. 27). Raymond Grew seems to recognize some of the deep connections between modernity and religious nationalisms (or what he calls fundamentalisms). In particular, his emphasis (which he merely lists) is on ways of thinking about teleology, dichotomies (self and other), community and family, identity, social change and social critique. My attempt is more to explore how these ways of thinking actually play themselves out vis-à-vis a variety of modern practices and institutions in the resurgence of contemporary religious nationalisms. One of the more interesting arguments that Grew makes that somewhat relates to mine is that “(f)undamentalism is not just a reaction to secularization but a product of it”. (Grew, pp. 26) He points out that modern societies that remove religion from the public realm, thereby also provide more autonomy to religion, which helps it to develop a concentrated power (of social critique) that can start encroaching beyond the accepted lines of demarcation of spheres.

community that is made possible through print capitalism)³⁶. In that sense, religious nationalisms remain connected to (and are an aspect of) modernity (and its instrumentalities) in quite integral ways. The growth of “televangelism” is perhaps one of the most visible examples of this phenomenon.³⁷

Other scholars point to aspects of modernity that make certain kinds of religious nationalisms likely and possible. It is important to recognize here that the nature of interaction among people has changed too with the growth of modern means of travel and communications, which has implications for different imaginings of community. Susanne Rudolph points out that even though religions have overflowed political boundaries for a long time, transnational religious formations in the contemporary world are very much the product of recent migrations and communications links that are a product of modernity.

“In an earlier transnationalism of Islam and Christianity, religion accompanied trade, conquest, and colonial domination. Versions of Christianity continue to flow outward from the West, but reverse flows are now conspicuous as well. Accustomed as we were to controlling the missionary terms of trade, we may be astonished to find “their” products flooding “our” market.”³⁸

We live in a world now in which not only do Hindu, Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists and other (non-Christian) religious groups reside in many parts of Europe and North America, but these are visible groups, with a sense of communal identity vis-à-vis the

³⁶ This is another reason I call such movements religious nationalisms (rather than fundamentalisms), because implicit in this project is the imagination of a community, or a ‘nation’ imagined on religious lines. I will highlight the link of modern religious nationalisms to the nation-state shortly.

³⁷ See Jeffrey K. Hadden, “The Globalization of American Televangelism”, in Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett, Religion and Global Order, Paragon House Publishers, New York, 1991 for an account of the growth and global spread of American televangelism.

larger society. These are groups whose presence can now be experienced less (although not without) the resources of a fictive imagination, and more directly through their physical proximity. This proximity of different religious groups, with a clearly defined sense of religio-political identity, is a product of modern conditions. In many ways, this proximity has tested the limits of Western secularism (against which non-Western fundamentalisms are defined), revealing the “religio-cultural core” that lies at the center of the formal separation between religion and politics, as will be elaborated on in the next chapter.

Religions as Constructions of Modernity

Implicit in the modernist project of secularism has been a particular understanding of politics - who can be legitimate political actors, what issues are political, what are the appropriate mechanisms for resolving political conflict. But to the extent that this project was seen as a universal project, this meant the recognition also of something called “religion” that was universal and general insofar that it was possible to identify different concrete manifestations of it in different places. Talal Asad has traced the genealogy of this concept and traces the first systematic attempts at identifying and producing a general category of “religion” to seventeenth century Europe and the particular history of post-Reformation Christianity.³⁹ The point that I want to make here is that what is often

³⁸ Susanne Hoerber Rudolph, “Introduction: Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society”, in Susanne Hoerber Rudolph and James Piscatori (ed.), Transnational Religion and Fading States, Westview Press, Boulder, 1997: pp. 3

³⁹ Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam. The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993. Asad applies this to understand the rise of Christianity and Islam as religions. In the Indian context, as I will point out again later, historians such as Romila Thapar have argued that the systematization of a diverse set of beliefs and practices into something called “Hinduism” arises out of orientalist readings of Indian history and society. As clarified in the introductory

assumed and taken as self-evident in debates on secularism - i.e. that religion exists and should or should not be separated from politics - is itself always somewhat problematic, and that descriptions of religions and the creation of religious communities do not exist prior to modernity (to be erased through modernity), but is partially the construction of modernity itself and constitutive of one of its principle elements - secularism.

In the postcolonial world, the entry of Christianity and Western colonial influence had much to do with the 'naming' of religion, and the demarcation (and hence recognition) of religious groups. For instance, Don Baker points out that "(i)n traditional East Asia, there was no word for religion as a separate and distinct sphere of life. There were religions, of course, but Buddhism, Taoism, Shinto, Confucianism, and folk beliefs and traditions were not brought together under one umbrella term or seen as inherently different from other forms of communal activity".⁴⁰ Baker shows how the global requirements of becoming a "modern nation-state" compelled East Asian states to draw sharper lines between the religious and political spheres, and the demands of 'secular modernity' required the official recognition of those religions that qualified for religious freedom. It is interesting in that light that the qualifications for official recognition that included criteria such as a scriptural base, an institutional /clerical hierarchy, clearly articulated doctrines, favoured transnational and established religions such as Protestantism, Catholicism and Buddhism and marginalized "popular" or "folk" religions such as shamanism (often dismissed as "superstition") since they "fail to meet the standard of modernity set by the West in that they often represent the less structured, less

chapter, in talking about religion, I am referring here not so much to religion as a system of meanings providing access, knowledge, experience, understanding of the transcendental, supernatural, extra or super-empirical realm, but to religion as an axis of social differentiation.

textual, less standardized pre-literate culture of the past and have few, if any, links with the modern international community”.⁴¹ Sometimes, indigenous religions have adopted some of the organizational, doctrinal and conceptual structures of Christian denominations in order to gain legal status. As Baker concludes,

“...when Christianity forced its way into East Asia in the nineteenth century, supported by the superior technology and economic clout of the West, it forced China, Korea, and Japan to begin to admit the existence of a separate sphere of human existence called “religion” whose autonomy the political community must respect. Not only Christian communities but all religious communities that fit the imported Western definition of a religious community benefited. They have now all been granted some measure of autonomy. The battle is now fought over how to define that sphere, not over whether or not it exists, *and that in itself is a victory for the Western concept of religion.*”⁴²

In chapter four I show how the demarcation of religious communities in India came out of the particular imperatives of both the modernist practices of colonialism and the modern project of the post-colonial state. It is partially through this construction that religion became an axis of both differentiation and potential conflict. I show how the taken-for-granted in much of contemporary political discourses on both the right and left in India – that Hindus and Muslims exist as two distinct communities, with different identities and (conflicting) interests – is a product of a series of modernist projects of the colonial and post-colonial state. These include a variety of knowledge systems and administrative practices. For instance, Indological studies of India enabled the systematization of a large number of parallel systems, local customs and practices into the category of “Hinduism” (attributed with a “spiritual essence”) and the distinction of this category from the one of “Islam” in India; the writing of colonial and subsequently

⁴⁰ Don Baker, “World Religions and National States in East Asia”, in Susanne H. Rudolph and James Piscatori (ed.), Transnational Religions and Fading States. Westview Press, Boulder, 1997: pp. 146.

⁴¹ *ibid*: pp. 167

nationalist Indian historiography enabled the division of Indian history into the linear stages of “Hindu period”, “Muslim period”, and “British period”; the conduct of scientific research and the collection of empiricist data imposed particular classificatory schemes and required the delineation of ethnic and religious groups (particularly through the census); the regulation of social practices for effective colonial administration required the creation and application of colonial law vis-à-vis different communities that had to be identified and described; etc. These processes through the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries increasingly set parameters around what were more fluid, local, custom-based communities, and in the process created certain kinds of differentiations and separations between religious communities that the postcolonial state inherited and reproduced through its own practices.

Hence, secularism insofar as it requires the recognition of “religions” that are to be guaranteed their “freedom”, is not simply the separation of politics from pre-existing religions, but also works toward the construction of religions, and more importantly, religious communities and religious identities, and this construction is political. The religions that religious nationalists offer are not unproblematic celebrations of tradition, but partially the product of modernity. The rearticulations that religious nationalisms effect always have to draw on existing structures of meanings and practices, the available discursive pre-understandings, the existing forms of knowledge in society. In that sense, rather than see religious nationalisms as disjunctures with modernity (as reactive explanations do), it might be more fruitful to see their continuities with modernity.

⁴² *ibid*: pp. 166, my italics.

The Link to the Nation-State

One of the central questions raised by scholars of religious nationalisms is the implication of the rise of religious nationalisms for the modern (secular) 'nation-state'. This is the question raised by David Westurlund in his edited volume called Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics.⁴³ This is also the question that Susanne Rudolph and James Piscatori raise in their edited book, Transnational Religion and Fading States⁴⁴, as do Martin Marty and Scott Appleby in their edited volume, Religion, Ethnicity, and Self Identity: Nations in Turmoil⁴⁵, albeit in quite different ways. The issue that confronts scholars here is that how do the boundaries (local and transnational) of religious movements mesh with, or contradict, existing national boundaries, and what effects that has on state efficacy and nation-building. Or to put it a little differently, how does the political imagination of contemporary religious movements adjust to the 'reality' of the political boundaries of existing nation-states, and with what implications for those boundaries?

In The Fundamentalism Project, editors Marty and Appleby recognize that the imagined political community of fundamentalisms do not often coincide with national boundaries.

"A member of the Jamaat-I-Islami, which numbers in the millions, will never know all of his fellows; nor do the one million members of the RSS function as a discrete unit. Each individual or group acts with a sense of his or her belonging to a larger whole that supercedes all other national or regional configurations. Even in the smaller groups such as the Jewish

⁴³ David Westurlund (ed.) Questioning the Secular State: The Worldwide Resurgence of Religion in Politics, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1996.

⁴⁴ Susanne Hoeber Rudolph and James Piscatori (ed.), Transnational Religion and Fading States, Westview Press, Boulder, 1997

⁴⁵ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), Religion, Ethnicity, and Self-Identity: Nations in Turmoil, United Press of New England, Hanover, 1997.

gush Emunim, or the American Christian Rescue, in which members may well know one another intimately, there is a sense of unity with a silent and faceless mass of passive believers who are waiting for the vanguard to plant the seed of the new Israel or the restored Christian America.”⁴⁶

The question of boundaries has plagued many religious movements. For instance, Islamic religious movements have long struggled with the cross-cutting identities and interests created by national boundaries. The rejection of nationalisms (including Arab nationalism) on the basis of the concept of *umma* (the universal community of believers) in many Islamic movements, has also often been accompanied by the reality of the factionalisms and shifting alliances across existing national boundaries, as demonstrated most clearly during the Gulf crisis. The reality of these existing national boundaries has placed the nation-state much more at the center of contemporary Islamic movements, so much so that James Piscatori points to the emergence of an intellectual consensus among Muslims “which sees the nation-state as part of the nature of things and perhaps even inherently Islamic.”⁴⁷

In chapter six, I show how the Hindu nationalist movement in India remains intimately connected with the nation-state project. It is interesting that while secularism is a concept whose genealogy is sometimes questioned, and its articulation with ‘modernity’ somewhat problematized, the ‘nation-state’ is a concept that is accepted unproblematically and uncritically. The ambivalence that has marked many Islamic movements over the ‘national’ question is conspicuous by its absence in Hindu nationalist discourse. In that sense, the question whether religious nationalisms threaten

⁴⁶ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies, and Militance, (Vol. 3), 1993: pp 623.

⁴⁷ James P. Piscatori, Islam in a World of Nation-States. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986; pp. 76.

the nation-state is really moot in the case of India. The more interesting question it seems to me, and one that I more specifically address in chapter four (and that this dissertation explores) is, how is national identity being reconstructed, given the 'givenness' of the nation-state construct. Chapter six looks at how the BJP articulates the concept of the nation-state to secure legitimacy for its claims on Hindu secularism. This project requires explicit rejection of India's multi-national character as well as of the claim that India is a post-colonial 'invention', and is based on a clear distinction between the concepts of the 'nation' and the 'state'. The seriousness of the project is evident in the significant amount of political labour that goes into defining "who belongs" to the Indian nation and in explicating the role of the state with respect to the 'nationals' and the 'non-nationals'. It seems quite clear that Hindu nationalist discourse is premised on the understanding that legitimate 'voice' in the modern world requires authorization by sovereign nation-state status, and the BJP attempts to speak in global affairs in the name of a 'unified and authentic nation' and a 'strong state'. Chapter six will highlight further the process through which unity, authenticity and state strength are staked.

The Response to Globalization

At one level, much of the earlier analyses of the links between religious nationalisms and modernity can be understood as emerging from the pressures and possibilities of globalization. The communications revolution and its contribution to the building of transnational and national religious communities is very much a part of contemporary globalizing trends. The globalization of the nation-state form, as covered in the previous chapter, also makes it necessary for religious movements to remain linked

to the nation-state question. But in this section I want to focus in particular on religious nationalisms as a particular kind of response to the homogenization thrusts of global modernity. In many ways, this part of my analysis predisposes me at least somewhat to a form of “reactive explanation”, although the reaction here is somewhat more complicated and nuanced than in the kinds of accounts I critiqued earlier.

The homogenization thrust of global modernity has produced a whole host of religio-cultural responses, in the third world, as well as in the West.⁴⁸ For Roland Robertson, “globalization” provides the conceptual key to understanding the global resurgence of religio-political tensions, and the “rethematization...of the intimate relationships between religion and politics and between theology and ideology”.⁴⁹ At one level, Robertson talks about the rise of “globally oriented movements”, the most prominent of which is the Roman Catholic Church, which are not simply transnational or multinational, but are distinct in that their leaders “are preoccupied with the concrete global-human circumstance as such”, “they direct much of their organizational concern at the present and future of the world as a single, systemic entity” and “they engage in concrete action directed at molding the world along their own preferred lines.”⁵⁰ But more importantly, and more relevant for here, is Robertson’s insight that all contemporary movements, including ones that are not so globally oriented, but have a

⁴⁸ For instance, as Casanova points out, the enthusiastic reception of certain forms of Eastern religiosity in the West as incorporated in the diffusion of “new age religions” signals the (two-way) globalization of culture that accompanies the internationalization of capital. (Jose Casanova, “The Politics of the Religious Revival”, in *Telos*, No. 59, Spring, 1984: see especially pp. 15-18.)

⁴⁹ Roland Robertson, “Church-State Relations and the World System”, in Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson (ed.), *Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions*, Transaction Inc., New Brunswick, 1987: pp. 43.

⁵⁰ *ibid*: pp. 40-43.

primarily “intra-societal” significance (such as in the U.S., India, Iran), arise under essentially “global-systemic constraints.”⁵¹ Let us see how that is the case.

Robertson points out that the participation of nation-states in the world system and the legitimation of their statehood encourages states to subscribe to the global norms of ‘secularism’. In other words, the globalization of norms imposes certain kinds of constraints on state behaviour. I had pointed out before that the resonance of ‘secularism’ in the middle-class Indian imagination requires even the BJP to lay claim to representing Indian/Hindu national identity without forsaking this claim to secularism. It is also the case then that the BJP aspirations to domestic political power (which simultaneously provides a voice in the international arena) makes ‘secularism’ an *international* symbolic resource that facilitates its international acceptance and legitimation. Yet, globalization also puts pressure on the national society to formulate an “identity” (or “particularism”) in relation to “global circumstances”.⁵² Religio-cultural resources are very valuable in defining these identities, in concretizing the imagination of such particularisms. As Peter Beyer points out, if the global system “corrodes inherited or constructed cultural and personal identities”, it also “encourages the creation and revitalization of particular identities as a way of gaining control over systemic power”, and it is in that respect that religion plays a vital role.⁵³ Hence, regardless of the degree to which there is formal, constitutional separation between religion and politics,

⁵¹ *ibid*: pp. 43. See also Roland Robertson, “A New Perspective on Religion and Secularization in the Global Context”, in Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe (eds), Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered, Paragon House, New York, 1989; and Roland Robertson, “Globalization, Modernization, and Postmodernism: The Ambiguous Position of Religion”, in Roland Robertson and William R. Garrett, Religion and Global Order, Paragon House Publishers, New York, 1991.

⁵² This is what Robertson calls the “relativization of particularisms”, an aspect of the heterogenizing thrusts that are also stimulated by globalization. I will elaborate on this much more in chapter four.

globalization leads to the “politicization of religion” and “religionization of the state”.⁵⁴ Thus even where religion appears as a negative “reaction” to globalization, Beyer warns that this does not mean that religion is “simply a regressive force”, since the revitalization of religion becomes a way of “asserting a particular (group) identity”, thus making it possible to compete for power and influence in the global system.⁵⁵

Japan in particular shows an interesting attempt to blend the demands of universalism (via secularism) and particularism (via religion). Recognizing the (invisible) role of Christianity in the construction of a cohesive identity in the West, the absence of any clearly definable Japanese religion led the builders of modern Japan to create and elevate State Shinto as a mechanism for national integration. Elevating the worship of local deities into a national cult and establishing a national network of priests and rituals to foster a love for Japan via Shintoism was pursued simultaneously with the adoption of a definition of religion that Shintoism did not fit.⁵⁶ Hence as Garrett points out, the requirements of modernization led Japan (but also China, Korea, Turkey and India) to revitalize State Shinto in an attempt to make its polity (and the place of religion within it) comparable and consistent with the expectations of western societies.⁵⁷ In other words, State Shinto allowed Japan to meet the globalized demands for *both* ‘secularism’ and (religiously-drawn) ‘identity’.

⁵³ Peter Beyer, Religion and Globalization, Sage Publications, London, 1994: pp. 3.

⁵⁴ Robertson, 1987: pp. 46

⁵⁵ Beyer, 1994: pp. 3-4

⁵⁶ See Don Baker, “World Religions and National States in East Asia”, in Susanne H. Rudolph and James Piscatori (ed.), Transnational Religions and Fading States. Westview Press, Boulder, CO, 1997: especially pp. 156-159.

⁵⁷ William R. Garrett, “Thinking Religion in the Global Circumstance: A Critique of Roland Robertson’s Globalization Theory”, in Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 31(3), 1992, 297-303.

The use of religion as a response to globalization has often also taken the form of an active resistance to globalization (as modernization). Here, secularism is more easily (although not necessarily) rejected as a degenerate aspect of modernity, and religion more unapologetically pursued.⁵⁸ The resistance to globalization in various parts of the world, both the West and non-West, has given rise to movements informed by religion. The “Westoxication” that the Iranian revolution responded to and the Christian Right task of “making America great again” are in some senses informed by similar imperatives. As Beyer points out, the New Christian Right in the U.S. attempts to restore Western dominance (to restore “America as the great nation God intended it to be”) by invoking traditional Christian moral values, combined with an emphasis on free enterprise and the battle against Communism.⁵⁹ This attempt is a response to the perception of the loss of “American identity” in the face of globalization – the flooding of the American market with “foreign” goods, the perceived loss of American competitiveness vis-à-vis other countries, the increasing visibility of “foreigners” in American social, political and cultural life, etc. In postcolonial societies, the articulation of globalization with imperialism gives an additional boost to “religious nationalisms as resistance”. Hence the catchy term “Westoxication” resonated and became a significant rallying cry not simply in Iran, but in many other parts of the Islamic and non-Islamic third world.⁶⁰ As

⁵⁸ This does not still delink such movements from the requirements and possibilities of modernity, but enables a particular kind of rhetorical strategy that more explicitly rejects aspects of modernity.

⁵⁹ Beyer, 1994: pp. 91-92. See also Richard L. Rubenstein, “God and Caesar in Conflict in the American Polity” in Jeffrey K. Hadden and Anson Shupe (ed.), Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered, Paragon House, New York, 1989 for the close relationship of the New Christian Right to the American capitalist system of free enterprise (and anti-communism).

⁶⁰ Robertson points out that resistance to contemporary globalization is not always a resistance to homogenization (a resistance which he thinks might be seen as a form of “anti-modernity”), but could also be a resistance to a heterogenized, particularized conception of the world as composed of culturally equal,

pointed out in chapter four and as elaborated extensively in chapter six, I show how the use of religion and religio-cultural community as a source of 'identity' in a world characterized by the homogenizing thrusts of modernity is critical to the discourse of Hindu nationalism. That the rising popularity of the BJP occurred simultaneously with the increased integration of India into the global political economy since the late 1980s is no coincidence. In chapter six, I take a close look at the discursive religio-cultural resources through which the BJP stakes its claim to particularism as a response and resistance to the homogenization thrusts of globalization.

Conclusion

One of the central questions raised by the preface of a special issue of Daedalus on "Religion and Politics" is "...whether the remarkable capacity of the world religions to survive in very different social settings, and with quite new dimensions and forms, does not attest to the fact that modernity, while influencing all established institutions, cannot destroy those that continue to respond to man's (sic) deepest needs, to understand suffering, age, and death, to respond to new societal cravings, but to do so in quite distinctive and different ways?"⁶¹ Accounts of the world that draw on the 'tradition-modernity' dichotomy always put religion in the former category. Yet, if modernity has influenced all established institutions, how can we understand the persistence of 'religion' without understanding how it speaks to, with, and from modernity? Notwithstanding the different levels of theoretical sophistication from which they might

relativized ways of life (a resistance which he says could be regarded as a form of "anti-postmodernity"). See Roland Robertson, Social Theory and Global Culture, Sage Publications, London, 1992; see pp 102.

be posed, “why religion survives” or “why modernization fails to destroy religion” are questions that ultimately emerge from within a modernization paradigm that is founded on the tradition/modernity dichotomy. In the context of my study, regardless of the particular genealogies and histories of religious beliefs and religious communities, the more interesting question is “how is religion modern?”

This chapter has been an attempt to show how religious nationalisms in the contemporary world remain connected to various aspects of modernity. Moving beyond the traditionalist rhetoric of such movements, one need to interrogate the *political process* through which particular interpretations of traditions are claimed, identities constructed, and interests served. My attempt in the chapters on India will be to show (a) how globalization (economic liberalization and the project of liberal democracy) makes possible the emergence of Hindu nationalism in India and (b) how the movement works on existing discursive meanings and understandings to reconfigure Indian national identity. These are processes that make sense only when one situates them within the postcolonial framework of India’s attempts to “become modern”, but in the “Indian way”.

⁶¹ Editor, “Preface to the Issue “Religion and Politics””, *Daedalus*, Vol. 120, No. 3. Summer 1991: pp. VII-VIII.

Chapter Three

The ‘Global Threat of Islam’ and the Limits of Western Secularism

Introduction

The previous chapter indicated that much of the post-cold war anxiety on the rise of religious nationalisms tends to cohere around the ‘global threat of Islam’. This chapter begins by detailing this tendency in much of Western media and scholarship, and situating this Orientalist tendency within the history of Western encounters with the Islamic world. The first part of this chapter also explores one discursive effect of this tendency by looking at how the BJP is able to draw on (and reproduce) this ‘global threat’ in producing its own more localized version of the ‘Islamic threat’. The second part of the chapter moves to situate and disturb the celebrations of ‘Western secularism’ by elaborating on some of the continuing connections between religion and politics in the Anglo-European world, and by highlighting in particular the “limits of Western secularism” in the face of the rising salience of “Islam within”. The purpose of this chapter is to raise certain questions about the global resurgence of religious nationalisms, without succumbing to Orientalist dichotomies in thinking about modernity and the world. Even though the bulk of this dissertation is on the rise of religious nationalism in India, this chapter attempts to lay to rest the conceit that “religious tolerance” (in the form of secularism) is a possession of the West, and an aspiration for the non-West. Rather than focusing too much on the formal separation of religion and politics, my attempt is to look at the more substantive connections and distances between the two, and their implications for global peace and conflict.

The Global Threat of Islam: The New Evil Empire?

The third volume of the Fundamentalism Project begins with the following words:

“In the early 1990s, pondering the collapse of communism across Eastern Europe and the unraveling of Marxist ideology, even in the Soviet Union, American political commentators speculated at some length: Whence will come the new enemy? Who or what will replace the “evil empire” as the focus of American reaction and enmity? What ideology, fortified by military, economic, or political power, will be virulent and contagious enough to challenge the efforts of liberal Western democracies to direct the future course of global development? “Religious fundamentalism” was the answer that came from some quarters.”¹

The endnote to the above passage documents examples of such speculation from the popular press, four out of five of which refer to the rise of Islamic forces, the remaining one referring to the rise of Hindu fundamentalism in India. Even though the emergence or resurgence of religious nationalisms around the world often raises consternation and concern from political commentators, the prominence of Islam within such narratives is unmistakable. If religious nationalisms seem a threat to (Western) secularism, it is rarely such nationalisms in the plural, and usually ‘the Islamic world’ in the singular that provides this fear. Let me highlight some of the prominent examples of this phenomenon.

Samuel Huntington’s now famous article argues that the end of the cold war portends the likely “clash of civilizations”.² Even though he identifies eight major civilizations, both the substantive content and tone of the article betray his apprehensions on the rising threat of Islam, his section on the “fault lines of civilizations” ending with the unmistakably polemical observation that “Islam has bloody borders”. He traces this impending confrontation both to the very long history of conflict between ‘Western’ and

¹ Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies, and Militance, (Vol. 3) University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993: pp. 1.

² Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations”, in Foreign Affairs 72, no. 3, Summer 1993.

'Islamic' civilizations and changing demographics within Western European countries with increasing Arab immigration, and ends the article with a series of proposals on what the West should do to prepare for this threat, which includes among other more benign measures, an exhortation to not let the (military) guard down. Huntington's ethnocentrism is barely muted, yet does not even begin to compare to the analysis of Bernard Lewis, who he quotes in the article, for coming to a conclusion similar to his own.

Professor Bernard Lewis, a leading scholar and political commentator on the Middle East gave a talk entitled "Islamic Fundamentalism" at the prestigious Jefferson lecture of 1990 in the U.S. A revised version of the talk became a lead article, "The Roots of Muslim Rage", in The Atlantic Monthly, and is the article from which Huntington quotes.³ The title itself betrays the essentializing quality and presuppositions that guide the analysis. The picture on the front cover of the magazine, depicting the image of the threatening Muslim everywhere, shows an angry, bearded, turbaned Muslim man with American flags in his glaring eyes. There are two pictures in the article that attempt to portray the Muslim perception of the West - the first is of a serpent marked with the stars and stripes crossing a desert and the second shows the serpent poised to strike from behind a Muslim man at prayer - both attempting to display the Arab/Muslim fear of American cunning and dominance. In general, the tenor of the article has little to do with exploring the context of anti-Western rhetoric used by certain Islamic organizations or of discriminating such organizations from others that have turned to Islam. The article draws on and confirms the stereotypes of irrational and backward Muslims, reactionary and violent.

³ Bernard Lewis, "Roots of Muslim Rage", Atlantic Monthly, 226:3, September 1990; pp. 47-60.

“It should now be clear that we are facing a mood and a movement far transcending the level of issues and policies and the governments that pursue them. This is no less than a clash of civilizations - the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judaeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both.”⁴

The (influential) intellectual framework established by Lewis and Huntington, finds echoes in the work of other scholars, is often parroted in the popular media, and sometimes shows up in the public pronouncements of state leaders and policy makers. Daniel Pipes, a scholar now writing extensively on the global Islamic threat, claims that Islam, an “ism” much like communism, has now come to replace the latter in the ideological battle of the twentieth century.⁵ Drawing (dubious) similarities between the “revolutions of 1917 and 1979”, the role of Moscow and Tehran in administering similar networks, etc., Pipes contends that the conservative Right’s approach to “confrontation” with the Islamic world (as previously with communism) needs to be pursued in place of the softer, accommodationist approach of the liberal Left, which according to him predominates Washington thinking, as well as the media and academia. Drawing explicitly from Lewis, a New York Times headline reads, “Seeing Green: The Red Menace is Gone. But Here’s Islam.”⁶ An article titled “A Holy War Heads Our Way” in the Reader’s Digest claims that the growing trend of Islamic radicalism in the Middle East threatens the West’s security interests, as Islamic fundamentalists may sow terror in

⁴ ibid: pp. 60

⁵ Daniel Pipes, “Same Difference”, in National Review, Nov 7, Vol. 46, No. 21, 1994; pp. 61-65.

⁶ Elaine Sciolino, “Seeing Green: The Red Menace is Gone. But Here’s Islam.”, New York Times, Sunday, June 21st, 1996. The article does go on to present a critique of this point of view as well. Another article in the New York Times raising concern over the Islamization of Bosnia says, “(t)he battle along this new *fault line* may for now be a cold one...(b)ut it would be foolish to think that fighting could not begin again.” (Chris Hedges, “In the Truce Line, A Vast New Divide”, New York Times, Sunday, Feb. 11th, 1996; my italics.) It is not uncommon to see Huntington’s (and Bernard Lewis’s) language reproduced in the media and public commentary in this fashion. New York Times Middle East correspondent Judith Miller has consistently taken the approach of a confrontational Islam in her news stories. Similarly journalist Steven

North America.⁷ Wily Claes, as Secretary General of NATO, in 1995 said that Islamic fundamentalism had replaced communism as the greatest threat to the Western alliance in the post-cold war world. Similarly, public figures in the U.S. such as Pat Buchanan and the occasional state department official have made public pronouncements on the post-cold war Islamic threat.

Why does Islam seem such a threat to these commentators? In some senses, Islam constitutes one of the most powerful, transnational forces in the world, with one billion adherents spread out across the globe. Muslims are a majority in some forty-five countries ranging from Africa to Southeast Asia, and they exist in growing and significant numbers in the U.S., many parts of the old Soviet Union, and especially in Europe. Rising salience of Islamic organizations and movements within Islamic countries, and increased visibility of Muslim immigrants in European countries, has created a certain hostility in the Western world. Despite the many differences among Islamic groups across the world, transnational Islam is being increasingly projected as the new global monolithic enemy of the West. Such sentiments predicting the impending “clash of civilizations” between the West and Islam is reflected in headlines that proclaim “The Green Menace”, “The New Crescent” “The Global Intifada”, “The New Crusades”, etc. However, such headlines and the above kind of commentaries capture the imagination of audiences in the Western world because they don’t come out of a vacuum, instead drawing on long-prevailing sentiments and an existing common-sense about Islam and Muslim peoples. There is a vast discursive reservoir of representations and

Emerson, executive producer of the documentary “Jihad in America”, aired on PBS, has become a commentator reputed for his position on a global Islamic conspiracy against America.

⁷ Fergus M. Bordewich, “A Holy War Heads Our Way”, *Reader’s Digest* (Canadian), January 1995, Vol. 146, No.873; pp. 81-85. Not surprisingly, one of the first responses of the media and the general public in

images of Islam that have been formed over many centuries of interactions between the Christian Occident and the Islamic Orient, and that is drawn upon in making such articulations. The next sub-section provides a very brief account of this historical process.

Historically Situating the ‘Global Islamic Threat’

Many scholars have documented the history of interactions through which Islam and Muslims came to occupy a place in the representational inventory of Anglo-European peoples.⁸ The Islamic world and Christian Europe has had a long history of encounters that go back to the early middle ages, which was the first period in which the growing military, cultural and religious hegemony of Islam began generating fear, apprehension and perceptions of threat within Europe. R.W. Southern traces this change in the relationship between the Christian and the Islamic worlds, and its resulting impact in Medieval Europe very effectively in his book Western Views on Islam in the Middle

the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, was to speculate on the emerging Islamic threat, leading in some unfortunate instances to the harassment of Arab-Americans.

⁸ The concept of an ‘Anglo-European self’, ‘Western culture’, or ‘Christian world’, is useful only for a certain level of analysis, in this case to capture the logic of the othering process as it is used to construct discourses of identity and difference within a global hegemonic culture. It is important to emphasize that such an identity is neither so unified, nor as stable, as the use of the concept would suggest, and it is necessary to guard against reproducing in an inverted form the very essentialized dichotomy that I am trying to critique here. In other words, not only were there many differences among nations and cultures in the particular techniques and manners of representation, given the different conceptual tools at hand and the different historical and contextual configurations of self-other relations, but there were also counterhegemonic discourses that challenged the prevailing and dominant representations available. In that sense, the othering process is always an internally contradictory and incomplete project. Even the geographical contours around which a European identity has been juxtaposed against a non-European one has been shifting historically, and the construction of an alleged European geographical continuity (tracing its ancestry to ancient Greece) around which the ‘myth of Eurocentrism’ (demarcating Europe from non-Europe) is constructed has been traced by some to the more modern post-Renaissance period of colonialism. (See Martin Bernal, Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Vol. 1: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1987 and Samir Amin, Eurocentrism. Translated by Russel Moore. Zed Books, London, 1989) Adding more sophistication and nuance to my argument here would require speaking in the plural of multiple Western cultures, formed in juxtaposition to both ‘internal’ as well as ‘external’ others.

Ages.⁹ Using the middle ages as the period that witnessed the earliest interaction of Western Europe with an 'external' religious other¹⁰, Southern's attempt is to study the "extremely slow penetration of Islam as an intellectually identifiable fact in Western minds, following after the year 1100 or thereabouts by a bewildering rapidity of shifting attitudes, in which the Islamic problem constantly took on new forms, partly in response to changes in the practical relations between East and West, but even more profoundly as a result of the changing interests and equipment of thought in Europe itself."¹¹ Southern traces these changes from the "age of ignorance" in which the alienness of Islam was the most marked, through the "age of a triumphant imagination" that came from the early successes of the Crusades, through "the century of reason and hope" that marked the beginning of a spirit of critical inquiry in Europe, to the "moment of vision" that saw the development of "strategies" to deal with the existence of Islam. What is particularly interesting about Southern's analysis is that he makes a concerted attempt to trace the *process* through which Western Europe was able to make sense of an unknown and threatening religion and culture, and how the particular images and representations that were generated in this process were articulated into a coherent discourse that was to crystallize into attitudes and perceptions that would dictate to a very large extent European interactions with its others both in the East and the West. At the same time, his analysis shows the extent to which the construction of this discourse reflects European thinking and imagination and how profoundly it was affected by internal processes within Europe.

⁹ R.W. Southern, Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages. Harvard University Press, Cambridge. 1962

¹⁰ with Judaism constituting one of the more important 'internal' religious others

¹¹ ibid, pp. 13

In ending his book, and evaluating the process through which Western consciousness attempted to make sense of its Islamic other, Southern says that what is most conspicuous is “the inability of any of these systems of thought to provide a finally satisfying explanation of the phenomenon they had set out to explain”.¹² What is important however is that not only did the shifting configuration of power between the Christian Occident and the Muslim Orient affect the interpretations and representations of ‘Islamic reality’, but imbued such representations with a force of their own that even as they fossilized in quality continued to multiply in quantity with a power of their own. As Said points out with respect to Southern’s analysis:

“it is finally Western ignorance which becomes more refined and complex, not some body of positive Western knowledge which increases in size and accuracy. For fictions have their own logic and their own dialectic of growth or decline...It is as if, having once settled on the Orient as a locale suitable for incarnating the infinite in a finite shape, Europe could not stop the practice; the Orient and the Oriental, Arab, Islamic, Indian, Chinese, or whatever, became repetitious pseudo-incarnations of some great original (Christ, Europe, the West) they were supposed to have been imitating. Only the source of these rather narcissistic Western ideas about the Orient changed in time, not their character”.¹³

In the growing ascendancy of Europe in the subsequent periods such habits of mind were to persist and be reinforced, providing the rationale and justification for European intervention in other parts of the world. It has been argued that it was the Ottoman threat that contributed to the development of ‘Europe’ as the focus of a common identity and bond within a European Christendom torn apart by the Reformation. But the alienation and distrust of Islam that had accumulated over the course of Muslim/Arab expansion into Europe through the crusades and the Ottoman empire is a legacy that

¹² *ibid*, pp. 108

¹³ Edward Said, *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, New York. 1979: pp. 62.

Albert Hourani notes is “still present in the consciousness of Western Europe”, and Islam is “still feared and still, in general, misunderstood”.¹⁴

Southern ended his survey with the end of the Middle Ages because he believed that “the problem loses much of its interest and complexity after this period,” since with the growing wealth of Europe, the slow decline of the Turkish empire and the discovery of the “New World”, “Islam seem(ed) less and less formidable”.¹⁵ Yet, even as the physical threat of Islam was considerably diluted, the problem of Islam continued to remain both interesting and complex, both in the continuities from the previous period and in terms of the mutations due to the change in historical circumstances. Rana Kabbani points out that the historical animosity between the Christian Occident and the Muslim Orient gradually changed, as the Ottoman threat grew continually less threatening, into a “fascinated distrust” instead, and it was precisely with this shift in attitude brought about by political circumstances that “the literary fabrication of the Orient became invaluable to the Western imagination...A shift in attitude had become strikingly visible by the nineteenth century; an ignorant awe had become a familiar contempt”.¹⁶ Both Said and Kabbani trace out some of the modes of representation used by European writers and travelers in depicting the Islamic East and its inhabitants in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, many of which mark strong continuities from the images of the previous periods.¹⁷ In the changed political circumstances of the colonial period, ‘demonization’ gave way to ‘inferiorization’. But the modes of representations

¹⁴ Albert Hourani, Europe and the Middle East. University of California Press. Berkeley. 1980: pp. 10.

¹⁵ Southern, 1962: pp. 13

¹⁶ Rana Kabbani, Europe’s Myths of Orient. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. 1986: pp. 138.

¹⁷ While Kabbani’s work focuses mostly on British travelogues with respect to the Islamic East, Said’s project is somewhat broader in analyzing the Anglo-French imperialist network as well as the post-world

used by European writers, scholars, travelers and administrators, show strong continuities from the images of the previous periods - converging on the essentialized Orientalist character as violent, tyrannical, lazy, lascivious, dirty, passive, etc. In a sense, this structure of imperial knowledges became the 'enabling condition' for colonial intervention. Orientalism did not simply serve as a rationalization for colonial intervention, but indeed made it possible, creating the discursive conditions that brought it into the horizon of possibilities and helped 'naturalize' its 'civilizing mission'.

It was with colonialism that Europe's religious and moral superiority was translated into its economic, political and technological superiority, so that the moral fervour of the middle ages was combined with the modern accent on material progress in colonialism. With colonialism the generation of this knowledge saw a tremendous surge, both in its quantitative output, and in its systematization and institutionalization, particularly marked with the emergence and development of the discipline of anthropology. Once again, the image of Islam as a retrogressive and backward religion was established, as Christianity became articulated to the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution.¹⁸ Hence the always complementary (even though sometimes contradictory) missions of "Crown and Cross" - of colonialists and missionaries together carrying the "white man's burden". The discourse of colonialism created the conditions for the construction of a 'white identity' that overrode its internal disparities.

war II American attitudes toward Arabs and Islam as reflected in the work of a number of writers, scholars and institutional networks.

¹⁸ This articulation of Christianity with progress is both interesting and problematic, given that in most modern narratives of progress as the previous chapter pointed out, religion is seen as a "hindrance" to economic, political and social development. It is after all on this basis that the persistence, or the resurgence, of Islam in some of the more "advanced" and "modern" countries of the Muslim world like Egypt, Lebanon and Turkey is seen and projected as obscurantist and illiberal, impeding the flow of progressive history.

Said also pays some attention to the changes brought about by the global shift in power over the 20th century. This was the period during which not only did the entire Orient gain political independence from Western empires, but also faced a new configuration of imperial powers - the United States and the Soviet Union. Said points out that even though the former constituted a “crisis” in Orientalism as politically armed and challenging national liberation movements in the ex-colonial Orient “worked havoc with Orientalist conceptions of passive, fatalistic “subject races””, the “reality” did not disturb or complicate to any significant degree the discursive consistency of Orientalism. As far as the reproduction of the discourse was concerned, the United States seemed to have stepped rather neatly into the shoes of Europe.

“France and Britain no longer occupy center stage in world politics; the American imperium has displaced them. A vast web of interests now links all parts of the former colonial world to the United States, just as a proliferation of academic subspecialties divides (and yet connects) all the former philological and European-based disciplines like Orientalism. The area specialist, as he is now called, lays claims to regional expertise, which is put at the service of government or business or both”.¹⁹

Said points out that books and articles regularly published on Islam and the Arabs show “absolutely no change over the virulent anti-Islamic polemics of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance”.²⁰

During the seventies the Muslim world grabbed official, media and general public attention with certain events in the Middle East - one was the Egyptian-Israeli war, but much more significant were the OPEC oil embargo of 1973 and the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79. The OPEC action signaled the emerging political significance of many Muslim

¹⁹ Said, 1979; pp. 285

²⁰ ibid; pp. 287.

countries due to their share of world oil reserves. While the oil embargo generated the first stirrings of material vulnerability, accompanied by media images of ‘robed’ and ‘quaint’ (albeit sinister) Middle Eastern leaders in command of the oil reserves of the world, the Iranian revolution came to symbolize the terror of ‘irrational’ Muslims turning their backs on the West and hence turning back history.²¹ Iran came to represent the embodiment of the ‘Islamic threat’, and Khomeini’s denouncement of the West and particularly the U.S. as the great Satan, made him the symbol of revolutionary Islam. Official public statements and popular media coverage in the West fixated on Khomeini as a medieval cleric and a menacing fanatic, particularly after the hostage crisis and the Rushdie affair, and popular opinion converged on the demonization of Khomeini. Similarly, the designation of Libya as an Islamic fundamentalist state, and Qaddafi as a representative fanatic of Islamic leaders did much to inform Western public opinion about the Middle East.²²

More significantly, Iranian and Libyan actions (or rather Khomeini’s and Qaddafi’s statements) came to be increasingly associated with a monolithic Islam - so that Western media and public rhetoric found it rather easy to talk about ‘Islamic terrorism’ and ‘Islamic bombs’. There was a tendency in much of Western media to equate Islam and Islamic activism with Qaddafi/Khomeini, identifying Islam with catchwords like ‘militant’, ‘fundamentalism’, and ‘terrorism’. All forms of Islam, Islamic revivalism, Islamic activism, were reduced to stereotypes of Islam against the

²¹ Edward Said, *Covering Islam*. Pantheon Books, New York. 1981.

²² This fixation of governments and the media far elevated the importance of Libya in terms of its resources and capabilities, and detracted from the opposition to Qaddafi in the Muslim world. Similarly, Iranian influence was also often exaggerated in the immediate aftermath of the shock of the overthrow of the Shah and rampant anti-Americanism in the public rhetoric and the government propaganda of Khomeini’s Islamic Republic. (See John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*. Oxford University Press, New York. 1992; see especially chapter 4, “Islam and the State: Dynamics of the Resurgence”)

West, Islam's war with modernity, or Muslim rage, extremism, fanaticism, terrorism. As Esposito points out, one never hears of actions of Western or Jewish states in terms of Christian rage or Jewish rage, nor do we expect Israel's or America's nuclear capabilities to be described in terms of Jewish or Christian bombs.²³ Discussions and debates on nuclear proliferation have also repeatedly drawn on the threatening images of Muslim 'fanatics' in possession of dangerous weapons that are otherwise safe in the hands of 'rational' Western leaders.²⁴ Similarly, the Persian Gulf Crisis and the actions of Saddam Hussein were placed in a framework of 'Western selves' against 'Islamic others'.²⁵ Despite the dubious credentials of Saddam Hussein in using the mantle of Islam and *Jihad* to gain populist appeal for his actions, and the support of many Muslim governments to the alliance against Hussein, his image and that of the Iraqi people more

²³ John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1992. It is important to point out here that there have always been critical voices in the Western academy and the media that have resisted this demonization of Islam. John Esposito has been one of the most consistent and vocal voices in this group. In general, the critiques take several different expressions. There are those who argue that Islam is expansionary only within the *umma* (the community of believers) and seeks neither confrontation, nor domination of the non-Muslim world. (See for instance, Zachary Karabell, "Fundamental Misconceptions: Islamic Foreign Policy", in *Foreign Policy*, Winter 1996, No. 105, pp. 76-90). There are others who argue that Islamic fundamentalism lacks the military or economic strength to pose a 'threat' to the Western world. (See for instance Alvin Z. Rubinstein, "Radical Islam May Threaten Muslim World, but Not West", in *Insight on the News*, Nov. 21, 1994, Vol. 10, No. 47, pp. 37-8) *The Economist* has taken a fairly conventional complex-interdependence approach in downplaying the significance of an 'Islamic threat' and arguing for the need to build better trade relations and economic ties with Middle-Eastern and other Muslim countries, as well as urging Muslim countries to liberalize and democratize. (See, "Living with Islam", *The Economist*, March 18, 1995, Vol. 334, No. 7906, pp. 13-4 and "Islam and the West", *The Economist*, August 6, 1994, Vol. 332, No. 7875, pp. 44-61; both cover stories that explicitly attack the 'Islamic threat' argument.) John Esposito, through his numerous writings and public lectures, has perhaps done the most in empirically discrediting the notion of a 'monolithic' Islam in the Western media, and has pointed to the many differentiations among Islamic organizations, movements, countries, cultures, etc. See also James P. Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation States*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986 for a similar critique of the 'threat of Islam'. The book by New York Times foreign correspondent, Judith Miller, *God has Ninety-Nine Names: Reporting from a Militant Middle East*, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1996 makes a similar point about the heterogeneity of Islamic movements in the Middle East, but remains framed by, and serves to reproduce many Orientalist stereotypes.

²⁴ The recent nuclearization of India may have complicated the location of this threat somewhat, even though the discursive consistency of Orientalism remained intact in much of the Western responses to the event.

generally, fit in rather neatly within the dominant understandings of Muslim 'fundamentalists' in Western society.

To sum up, there is a prevailing tendency of governments in the West, the media and many analysts to conclude, without regard to the diversity of Islamic organizations and specific social contexts, that Islamic fundamentalism is inherently a major global threat. Images of a historic and global militant Islam formed through early Muslim expansion and conquests, the Crusades and the fall of Jerusalem and Ottoman hegemony over Eastern Europe and its threat to conquer the West; the nationalist movements against European colonial rule; Arab-Israeli wars; the economic threat of oil embargoes; Iran's humiliation of an "America held hostage" and its threat to export its revolution, media images of despots (Qaddafi, Khomeini, Saddam Hussein) wielding an 'Islamic sword', the specter of radical revolutionary groups seizing Western hostages, hijacking planes, blowing up buildings; death threats against Salman Rushdie, etc. - are all read as part of the same grand narrative of a militant, confrontational Islam waging war against the West (and its Judaeo-Christian tradition).²⁶ The differences in contexts are all lost in an

²⁵ David Campbell, Politics Without Principle: Sovereignty, Ethics and the Narratives of the Gulf War. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder. 1993.

²⁶ It is important to point out here, as Aijaz Ahmad does in his critique of Said's Orientalism, that such essentializing procedures of othering are not exclusive to the West. As Ahmad points out, it is common in the Muslim world to draw epistemological and ontological distinctions between East and West, the Islamicate and Christendom, most prominently articulated in Ayatollah Khomeini's oppositional rhetoric during the Iranian revolution. (Aijaz Ahmad, In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures. Verso, London. 1992) (Similarly, as I will point in later chapters, it is quite common in India to posit 'Hindu spirituality' against 'Western materialism', and of course, 'Muslim barbarity'.) It is quite common in the Muslim world to read the aggression and intolerance of Christian-initiated Crusades and the Inquisition; European colonialism; the breakup of the Ottoman empire and the artificial creation of modern nation-states in the Middle East; the establishment of Israel and Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and its invasion and occupation of Lebanon; the extent to which oil interests have been the determining factor in Western support for autocratic regimes; the Persian Gulf war; the lack of Western action in Bosnia, etc. as part of a totalizing narrative of the Western-Zionist approach toward the Muslim world, and images of Western 'materiality' and 'decadence' abound in public perceptions and rhetoric. (See Esposito, 1992) But what makes it important, and perhaps urgent, to focus on the European form of these prejudices, is the special force in history they derived from the success of European colonial conquests, and their resulting devastating consequences for the lives of millions of people. (Ahmad, 1992: pp. 183-184) This continues

Orientalist narrative that draws on the dominant discursive structure within which the Christian Occident and the Islamic Orient are essentially ontologically opposed. Contemporary discourses on the 'Global Threat of Islam' and 'The New Cold War' fit within this paradigm.

The 'Global Threat of Islam' in Hindu Nationalist Discourse

I am not so much concerned here with analyzing the extent to which Islam and the Muslim world (if at all one could draw such clear boundaries) does indeed constitute a 'threat' to the Western world, or to the goals of democracy, secularism, modernity. As pointed out before, the critiques of a monolithic Islamic threat have been offered vigorously and persuasively (even if not always prominently). What is more interesting to me is to note the discursive effects of some of the dominant and powerful tendencies in Western media and commentary to construct a discourse of the 'global Islamic threat'. Even if, as James Piscatori points out, 'the global Islamic threat' yields "an imagined rather than an empirical transnational Islamic unity and reality",²⁷ in the unequally structured terrain of the global political-economy, this 'imagination' has powerful effects. In one sense, the 'success' of the discourse on the global Islamic threat is evidenced in its discursive value in articulating a variety of different agendas.

to have relevance in the structuring of the contemporary global political-order in terms of an Anglo-European hegemony. It is for instance much more common (even in large parts of the non-Western world) to hear of the global spread and threat of Islam, even though the geographical scope of the Evangelical movement (especially Pentecostal) is much wider, and (unlike Islamic movements that are occurring primarily in Muslim majority areas or where large numbers of Muslim immigrants are present) it is spreading to areas where it is relatively 'foreign'. In other words, the 'discursive prominence' of the othering of Muslims as reflected in the discourse on the 'global threat of Islam', is intimately connected to the material level of the contemporary global political-economy. It is because of this that this discourse carries a certain potency, that as I will show shortly, has real political consequences.

²⁷ Esposito, 1992; pp. 182.

It is interesting to find how movements around the world are able to tap into the discourse of a 'global Islamic threat' to boost their own specific versions of anti-Islamic religious nationalisms. For instance, in Bosnia in the early 1990s, one of the major reasons given by Serbian nationalists in justifying their policy of "ethnic cleansing" was "their alleged fear that the Bosnian Muslims would establish "a fundamentalist Islamic state". They claimed that "fundamentalists would use Bosnia as a base for Islamic expansion across Europe."²⁸ Without going into the complicated reasons for the lack of Western intervention in this conflict, it is clear that there is a recognition in Serbian propaganda of the resonance of 'the global Islamic threat' in Western perceptions and actions. Israeli leaders have often referred to the worldwide dangers of growing Islamic fundamentalism in justifying repressive actions towards Palestinians, drawing on, playing upon, and reproducing the same discourse. This recognition of the discursive value of the 'global Islamic threat' also seems implicit in the BJP discourse on the threat of Islam.

Presently interim prime minister of India, and leader of the BJP, Atal Behari Vajpayee ends a lecture on Indian secularism by describing the emerging world in the post-cold war period.

"Several dramatic changes have taken place in the world. No one could have ever even imagined of such changes a few years ago. Some changes augur well, but there are also changes which spell uncertainty. The end of the cold war gives rise to the hope that the world community would move fast towards achieving the goal of disarmament and some part of the heavy expenditure on defence equipment would now be made available to the third world countries for their economic development. *However, the emergence of religious fundamentalism and its alliance with terrorism in some parts of the world have caused serious apprehensions.* It is a serious situation. While keeping a watchful eye on the developments in neighbouring and other countries, we have to remain firm in maintaining our traditions and culture. We have to give a concrete shape to our resolve

²⁸ from Mark Juergensmeyer, "Antifundamentalism", in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (eds.), Fundamentalisms Comprehended, (Vol. 5) University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1995; pp. 353.

to build an India where there is no discrimination on the basis of the community or the way of worship.”²⁹

That Vajpayee recognizes this emerging threat of religious nationalisms, yet leaves its source unnamed, signals at least two (strategic) moves. On the one hand, as a leader of a party that is generally accepted as religious-nationalist, his statement implicitly, but strategically, rejects Hindu nationalism as falling within this “fundamentalist” category (despite attempts in the West to situate it as such). In participating in the process of the ‘othering’ of fundamentalism, he is implicitly situating the BJP in the ‘self’ that is in opposition to fundamentalism. On the other hand, in leaving the explicit source of fundamentalism unsaid, Vajpayee shows his (perhaps strategic) acceptance of the unspoken common-sense of the world - that that source *must be* Islamic.³⁰ In that sense, the ‘unsaid’ here functions as (and helps constitute) the site for the ‘taken-for-granted’.

In another place within BJP discourse, the threat is more explicitly identified,

*“It is being realized by all democratic countries that today the greatest threat to world peace emanates from Islamic fundamentalism. The fact that a revolt against the autocratic rule of the former Shah of Iran was successfully led by a Muslim religious leader has given a kind of divine injunction to Islamic clergy all over the world to establish an Islam Utopia on the surface of the globe. To achieve their goal, they have adopted the weapon of terrorism. This mixture has proved to be the main destabilizer of society today.”*³¹

It is interesting here that the ‘self’ (that opposes fundamentalism) is clearly named – it is ‘democracy’. Democracy here becomes the marker of a common (modern) civilizational

²⁹ Atal Behari Vajpayee, *Secularism: The Indian Concept*, Dr. Rajendra Prasad Lecture 1992, organized by All India Radio, December 2 & 3, 1992, published as Bharatiya Janata Party Publication No. 124, New Delhi, 1992; pp. 28., my italics.

³⁰ Hence the implicit reference in the sentence following the italicized one in the above quote on “keeping a watchful eye on the developments in neighbouring...countries” refers primarily to Pakistan and Bangladesh. In chapter seven, I show how the “Islamic-fundamentalist otherness” of Pakistan and Bangladesh is critical to the constitution of the “Hindu-secular self” in the Hindu/Indian nationalist imagination.

boundary that the BJP shares with the West in the act of naming the common enemy – (anti-modern) ‘Islamic fundamentalism’. An article in the BJP published newsmagazine, BJP Today titled “The Fundamentalists (sic) Threat to USA”, that identifies the growing recognition within the U.S. of the emerging Muslim terrorist threat,³² is designed in more explicitly marking out this common Islamic threat that plagues *both* the West and India.

Further, in ‘naming’ this threat, the words used sometimes are familiar and evocative, as another article says that (t)he emerging reality is that India is being gradually encircled by a *hostile Islamic fundamentalist arc* which besides being a *security threat*, is a *civilizational challenge* as well.”³³ The ghost of Huntington is unmistakable! The article goes on to say that mobilizing international opinion on this score is imperative.³⁴ Clearly, international/Western opinion is more easily mobilized by tapping into Western fears and apprehensions, and to do so in a language that is familiar.

In later chapters, I will trace in much more detail the process through which Muslims are othered in the construction of a Hindu/Indian nation. It is interesting to note here that some of the discursive resources in the articulation of that process come from the discourse on the ‘global Islamic threat’. The political potency of this discourse is evidenced in the manner in which it can “produce” such effects in such different locales.

³¹ “Our Foreign Policy Agenda for the Future”, Foreign Policy and Resolutions, Bharatiya Janata Party Publication No. E/17/95, New Delhi, 1995; pp. 5, my italics.

³² Author Anonymous, “The Fundamentalists (sic) Threat to USA”, in BJP Today, December 16-31, 1994, pp. 25-26.

³³ BJP on Kashmir, BJP Publication E/13/95, New Delhi, 1995; pp. 36; my italics

³⁴ Ibid; pp. 37. In particular, a relationship with Israel, “which has had a long experience of fighting fundamentalism and terrorism” is strongly recommended on this score.

Western Secularism and its Limits

In introducing an article on the Punjab crisis, an editor of the Atlantic Monthly described as “one of the grimmer and more ironic development of the late twentieth century” the manner in which religion had inflamed the Third World, adding further that religion is “on the whole a benign force in Western societies”, but in the non-Western world it “often combines combustibly with nationalism to fuel political murder.” Soon after presenting this position, Mark Juergensmeyer goes on to claim that rather than assuming that “something is seriously wrong with religion in the non-Western world”, he himself takes a different approach by trying to take the perspective of the religious activists who find something wrong with secular nationalism.³⁵ Yet, it is interesting to note that he leaves the ethnocentric assumptions underlying the broad generalizations of the writer unquestioned. This tendency of Juergensmeyer to accept unproblematically accounts of the decline of religion in the West and the difficulty of “bridling” religion in the third world underlies most of his book.³⁶ In a similar vein, Marty and Appleby conclude their third volume in the Fundamentalism Project on the note that the institutionalization of the public/private distinction, and more importantly the privatization of religion in Western democracies, makes “fundamentalism...less likely to dictate the course of national self-definition.”³⁷ The taken-for-granted of the articulation of Western democracy with secularism underlies many accounts and commentaries on

³⁵ Mark Juergensmeyer, The New Cold War? Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993: pp. 2.

³⁶ ibid, see for instance pp. 14.

³⁷ Fundamentalisms and the State: Remaking Politics, Economies, and Militance, (Vol. 3) University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1993: pp. 640. This is immediately contrasted with the lack of such distinctions in Islamic thought.

religion and politics.³⁸ However, even if this articulation of secularism with modern democracy can be taken as self-evident, the extent to which the ‘formal’ separation of religion from politics can restrain the *actual* influence of religion on politics is questionable.³⁹ But to understand why public religion is perceived as ‘transgressing’ established boundaries, one needs to understand how indeed secularism ‘constructs’ these boundaries, and their salience within modernity.

Secularism raises the issue of the proper relationship of religion and politics in modern societies, and its birth as a principle of good government is often traced to the Enlightenment period of European history and its displacement of the authority of the Church in matters of political governance. In the narrative of progressive modernity, the

³⁸ Not only is secularism often conflated with Western modernity, but there are some who articulate secularism more specifically with Christianity. There are many who find the basis of Western Secularism in Christianity. For instance, Arend Theodor van Leeuwen argued that secularism is not simply European, but more specifically Christian in its origins, the Enlightenment having simply brought back Christianity’s secularizing trajectory that had been perverted by the relationship between the medieval church and the state. Van Leeuwen saw the inevitable and benign (although not always smooth) spread of secularism around the world as Christianity’s gift to the world. Arend Theodor van Leeuwen, Christianity in World History: The Meeting of the Faiths of East and West, (trans. By H.H. Harkins), Edinburgh House Press, Edinburgh, 1964. Casanova, in a much more sophisticated analysis, points out that the “paradigmatic power” of “foundational myths” in the historical transmission of religious traditions has meant the much easier accommodation of Christianity with secularism (since the Christian “myth of origins” accepts a religious community as separate from a political community) than of a religion like Islam whose myth of origins is based on a more comprehensive religio-political community (the *umma*). (Jose Casanova, “Private and Public Religions”, in Social Research, Vol. 59, No. 1, Spring 1992; see pp. 43-51) As mentioned in the previous chapter, notwithstanding the specific history and genealogy of secularism, the concept and the idea now has resonances (and in that sense ‘belongs’) in several non-Christian, non-Western contexts as well. Additionally, one of the political implications of presentations of secularism-as-Euro-Christian is that it can (and does as in one version of secularism in India, as shown in a later chapter) become the basis for the (anti-imperialist) rejection of secularism-as-alien by religious nationalists in the third world.

³⁹ When thinking of the relation between religion and politics, most analyses remain tied to the dichotomy between secularism and theocracy. Sometimes, a third category is added to accommodate the “grey areas”. For instance, Hallencreutz and Westerlund make distinctions between a “confessional policy of religion” (where a particular religious tradition or community is politically privileged, and religion and politics are in close interaction, this including theocracies such as Iran), the “secular policy of religion” (which presupposes at least a formal separation of the religion and the state, with individual and corporate religious freedoms granted to more or less extent) and the “generally religious policy on religion” (where the state is guided by religion, but not institutionally attached to any particular religion, such as in Indonesia) (Carl F. Hallencreutz and David Westerlund, “Introduction: Anti-Secularist Policies of Religion”, in David Westerlund (ed.), Questioning the Secular State, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1996; pp. 2-3)

separation of religion from politics (and science) forms one of the constituting principles of the modern condition. The sense of alarm that religious claims to identity cause is partly because such claims are seen to transgress the *legitimate* sphere of religion in modern polities (in the private realm) that the idea of secularism defines and hence constitutes. Jose Casanova points out that in a sense the principle of secularism is constitutive of modernity. According to Casanova, “(a)s inaccurate as it may be as an empirical statement, to say that “religion is a private affair” is nonetheless constitutive of Western modernity in a dual sense.” First, since religious freedom, in the sense of freedom of conscience, is chronologically “the first freedom,” and freedom of conscience is intrinsically related to “the right to privacy” (in the institutionalization of a private sphere free from government and ecclesiastical intrusions), it serves as the precondition of all modern freedoms, and hence constitutes the very foundations of modern liberalism and modern individualism. Second, the privatization of religion also refers to the process of institutional differentiation (the separation of the economy and the sphere of politics from ecclesiastical control) that is constitutive of modernity.⁴⁰ Secularism here refers to the ‘privatization’ of religion – not that traditional religions lose all social salience (in directing individual lives, behaviours, beliefs), but that they lose “public” salience as they are relocated to the private sphere.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Jose Casanova, “Private and Public Religions”, in *Social Research*, Vol. 59, No. 1, Spring 1992: pp. 17-18.

⁴¹ See Casanova, *ibid*, for an excellent discussion on the variety of ways in which the public/private distinction is drawn with respect to religion. Casanova points out that since the liberal conception of politics tends to confuse state, public and political, the disestablishment of religion is understood and prescribed as privatization as well as depoliticization. He also draws on the feminist critique of the public male/private female split to show how the historical process of the privatization of religion is a process of ‘feminization’, in which religion (and morality), exempt from public rationality, is consigned to the sentimentalized sphere of the private. (See especially pp. 20-37)

Now, even if Western secularism is in general accepted as a given, the U.S. is one case that has always intrigued scholars and problematized that assumption. The question of the religious identity of the 'American nation' has clearly marked public debates about immigration, alcohol consumption, sabbath observance, and especially, public education, so that Kenneth Wald believes that religion functions as a "silent cleavage" in American politics.⁴² Based on the consistently high church religiosity and the resilience of religious organizations in the U.S., sociologists such as Andrew Greeley had been one of the first to argue strongly against what he called the "secularization myth".⁴³ Greeley argued that religion has always fulfilled certain essential needs of the human condition, and even with the institutional separation of different spheres in modern society, religion continued to have significant social and individual relevance. Coming from the functionalist school within sociology, the conceptualization of Robert Bellah's "Civil Religion" in formally secular states was an attempt to show that religion in the modern world does not disappear, so much as it is transformed.⁴⁴ Rather than banishing religion from the public, public religions take new cultural forms. In such an analysis, religion is an institution that performs a socially integrative function by creating the normative consensus that holds a society together. As Bellah has pointed out, the religious accent of secularism in the U.S., as evidenced in the inaugural speeches of presidents and the rhetoric of other public speakers and the religious nature of public ceremonies, provides religious

⁴² Kenneth D. Wald, "Social Change and Political Response: The Silent Religious Cleavage in North America", in George Moyser (ed.), Politics and Religion in the Modern World. Routledge, London, 1991.

⁴³ See Andrew M. Greeley, Unsecular Man: The Persistence of Religion. Schocken Books, New York, 1972.

⁴⁴ Robert Neely Bellah, The Broken Covenant: American Civil Religion in Time of Trial. (2nd edition), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992. The title of Bellah's book "The Broken Covenant", reveals his belief in the continuing erosion of religious-moral values in American society in the face of the rational, technical, utilitarian ideology of self-interest.

legitimacy for the state and gives nationalism a religious aura.⁴⁵ It seems to me that it may be useful to understand the recent resurgence of the Christian Right in U.S. politics as deriving from this religiously-inflected (even if politically marginalized) space. The articulation of Christianity with the “American way of life” in the Christian Right discourse can only resonate if one understands the invisible religious undertone of ‘secular’ U.S. politics.⁴⁶

There are some scholars who believe that the secularization thesis holds only for Europe. Critiquing the “tendency to identify the truly modern moment as what occurs in western Europe” so that other places exhibiting vigorous religiosity are somehow behind, David Martin points out that ‘secularization’ was a product of the specific historical circumstances obtaining in the battle between the Church and Enlightenment in Europe, and the sociological model of secularization best applies to Europe.⁴⁷ Hence, even though non-European contexts (and he includes examples from North America, Latin America and the Middle East) are influenced by the European experience, they are not determined by it, and should not be expected to follow some universal social logic encapsulated in the European experience.⁴⁸ Similarly, Peter Berger points out that even

⁴⁵ The institutionalization of this norm is evidenced in the decision in the 1950s to amend the Pledge of allegiance to refer to the United States as “one nation under God”. But this concept of ‘civil religions’ has been looked at differently by other authors. In Robertson’s analysis for instance, civil religions have to do with “identity” issues experienced by formally secularized societies. In his words, the “globally legitimated secular state”, even though lacking the “aura of the genuinely sacred”, and with religion being constitutionally denied, have often, even if unintentionally, drawn religious interests into it to give expression to its particularistic identity. (Robertson, “Church State Relations and the World System”, in Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson (ed.), Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions, Transaction Inc., New Brunswick, 1987: see pp. 43-47)

⁴⁶ In chapter five I show how the postcolonial Indian state under the ‘formally secular’ Congress regime had a distinctly Hindu accent, and it is this that created the space for the current rise of Hindu nationalism.

⁴⁷ David Martin, “The secularization issue: prospect and retrospect”, in The British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 42, Issue 3, September 1991: pp. 466.

⁴⁸ But, as he points out in the course of the article, there are three factors that qualify the applicability of the secularization thesis even to Europe. On the one hand, the particular historical conditions that gave birth to the principle of secularization in Europe no longer obtain in contemporary Europe, and with the discrediting of liberal and Marxist views of history, perhaps a new kind of space for religiosity is opening

though the world today is massively religious, with vigorous upsurges of conservative religions worldwide, Western Europe, with its “massively secular Euro-culture”, is an apparent exception where the secularization thesis does hold.⁴⁹

However, the very exceptions that these authors are forced to note (as in footnotes 48 and 49) suggest the inadequacy of holding on rigidly to the secularization thesis, rather than looking at the specific and different ways that religion and politics are articulated in different socio-historic situations. Roland Robertson points out that rather than taking the term ‘separation’ (of the church and state) literally one needs to examine the “structure of conjuncture”, which means “paying attention to the ways in which church and state are coordinated.”⁵⁰ The theme of ‘civil religion’ has been one way of conceptualizing this conjuncture, and even though it has usually been applied to Western societies, most notably the United States, in which Christianity has been the dominant religious tradition, this is also true of other ‘formally secular’ contexts such as India, where a dominant religion coexists with a variety of other religions. Similarly, Talal Asad has pointed out that the “...separation (of religion from the state) has always

up. Second, even within Europe, major national communities or subnational communities that had experienced alien and external rule had often found their major resource and source of identity in historic faiths. This is true for instance in the cases of Poland and Ireland, and in the Basque country, Croatia and Brittany. Third, similar to the second group, are the new migrant Muslim communities in contemporary Europe. (David Martin, “The secularization issue: prospect and retrospect”, The British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 42, Issue 3, Sept 1991: 465-474) One could add to this list the protracted conflict in Northern Ireland.

⁴⁹ Peter L. Berger, “Secularism in Retreat”, in The National Interest, Winter 1996/97; pp 3-12. But even he recognizes the survival of religion in Western Europe, mostly Christian, despite widespread alienation from organized churches, which to him indicates “a shift in the institutional location of religion, rather than secularization.” (pp. 8). He also points to an international subculture composed of ‘secularized’ people with Western-type higher education, especially in the humanities and social sciences, that even though a minority, are very influential, and provide the “official” definitions of reality (through the educational system, the media of mass communication, and the legal system). Hence, he points out, religious upsurges “have a strongly populist character”, being also “movements of protest and resistance *against* a secular elite”, sharing a “globalized *elite* culture”. (pp. 8)

⁵⁰ Roland Robertson, “General Considerations in the Study of Contemporary Church-State Relationships”, in Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson (ed.), Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions,

involved links between “religion” on the one hand and public knowledge, moral identity, and political processes on the other (varying, of course, from one Western country to another). It is not just that the separation (“secularization”) has been incomplete, but that even in Western liberal societies “modernized religion” and “secular culture” have supported each other in crucial, if often indirect, ways.”⁵¹ Hence, it is important to look at how secularism has been articulated in particular socio-historic circumstances, and how the principle of “religious tolerance” that underlies secularism has fared *in practice* in the presence of visible religious minorities. The next section focuses specifically on the European (and particularly British) experience with secularism, particularly in light of the ‘Islamic threat’ posed by postcolonial Muslim immigrants.

“Islam Within”: Postcolonial Muslim Immigrants in Western Europe/Britain

The principle of secularism takes different formal expressions in different West European countries.⁵² While in France, Germany and the Netherlands, the principle of freedom of religion and the separation of the Church and State are enshrined in the Constitution, in Britain, the Church of England is recognized as the dominant church, and the Queen is both the Head of State and of the Church of England (and the Church of

Transaction Inc., New Brunswick, 1987: pp. 9. In his words, “for if church and state were truly – as opposed to constitutionally - separated, there would be no society at all”. (pp. 9)

⁵¹ Talal Asad, “Religion and Politics: An Introduction”, in Social Research, Vol. 59, No. 1, Spring 1992: pp. 3.

⁵² John Madeley points out that it was the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia that ‘fixed’ the religious or confessional map of Europe, by providing jurisdiction over religious matters (including the power to decide which religion should be established in a particular territory) to political authorities, one effect of which was “to reinforce tendencies to religious uniformity *within* political units (while recognizing religious differences between them) and over time to entrench the different confessional forms of Christianity in the culture of Europe’s various national population groups.” (John Madeley, “Politics and Religion in Western Europe”, in George Moyser (ed.), Politics and Religion in the Modern World. Routledge, London, 1991; pp. 32)

Scotland).⁵³ This is similar to Sweden and Denmark where the Lutheran and Evangelical Lutheran Churches respectively enjoy dominant positions. In these latter cases, the principle of secularism is already somewhat compromised by the privileged position of a particular church. However, this privilege is seen in general to be the reflection of a 'depoliticized tradition', rather than the influence of religion on politics.⁵⁴ What is more interesting is to explore the *actual working out* of a generalized assumption of 'religious tolerance' as enshrined in the principle of secularism, in the context of multi-religious and multi-cultural societies in Western Europe.

In one sense, Europe has always been multicultural. What goes under European or even Western culture is a product of Hellenistic, Roman, Middle Eastern and Germanic intermixing with previous cultures. Britain had its Celtic, Norse, Saxon and Norman immigrations that were aided by more recent Dutch, Huguenot, Jewish, Italian, Polish and Ukrainian influxes. All other European countries were similarly mixed, much before Muslim immigration into Europe. However, the issue of the growing Muslim presence *within* Western Europe, which to a large extent derives from immigration from former colonies, has disturbed somewhat stable (even if not coherent, and always

⁵³ It is important to point out here that the Church of England has often taken a critical social and political stand on various issues. In particular, the Church had been a prominent critic of Thatcherism, both in foreign and social policy, which of course had disturbed many members of parliament, including Margaret Thatcher, who not only saw the Church as a natural ally of the Conservative Party, but also defended Thatcherite policies as 'Christian'. But notwithstanding this critical role, the Church of England has also tried to defend its own position as the 'national church', and has had some trouble coming to terms with religion pluralism. See David Nicholls, "Politics and the Church of England", The Political Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 2, April-June 1990. For an account of the secularization of British society and the place of the Church of England in that process, see Alan D. Gilbert, The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularization of Modern Society. Longman, London, 1980.

⁵⁴ In general scholars tend to downplay the religious issue, particularly in the case of Britain, where unlike some of the other West European countries like Germany where Christian Democratic Parties (even though disassociated from explicit links with the interests of the church or any religious community) continue to have a political presence, party politics has been structured more around class cleavages. (See for instance John Madeley, "Politics and Religion in Western Europe", in George Moyser (ed.), Politics and Religion in the Modern World. Routledge, London, 1991)

hierarchical) post-imperial European identities that have always partially been defined vis-à-vis an Islam that is 'outside'.

Muslims have always been present in Europe before.⁵⁵ But there was a sharp increase in labour immigration from Muslim countries to Western Europe in a rather short span of time after world war II and especially during the late 1950s and 1960s.⁵⁶ Labour migration was reduced significantly after the oil crisis and the decline in the economy of most Western European countries during the 1970s. This reduction was aided by stricter immigration laws, partially in response to growing racist anti-immigrant sentiments, which in many cases limited the unrestricted migration (and nationalization) of formerly colonized people to the 'motherland'. For instance, in Britain the first Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1962 had first restricted immigration from the New Commonwealth countries in particular and was enacted in response to a racist public debate on the desirability of "colored" immigrants in the wake of several race riots. The 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act further restricted immigration by withdrawing the automatic right of entry from British passport holders who could not show family connection with Britain and was designed to primarily control the immigration of East African Asians from Kenya and Uganda fleeing the Africanization movements in those countries.⁵⁷ Muslim immigration now occurs for mostly political reasons (refugees) from

⁵⁵ See Jorgen S. Nielsen, "A Brief History", in Muslims in Western Europe. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh. 1992 for an account of the early (pre-world war II) Muslim presence in Europe. The Islamization of parts of Europe during the Ottoman expansion has recently received renewed attention with the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo. However, this chapter deals more specifically with post-colonial immigration that began in the post-world war II era.

⁵⁶ See Tomas Gerhold and Yngve Georg Lithman (ed.), The New Islamic Presence in Western Europe. Mansell Publishing Limited, London. 1988; Jorgen S. Nielsen, Muslims in Western Europe. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh. 1992; and W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld, The Integration of Islam and Hinduism in Western Europe. Kok Pharos Publishing House, the Netherlands. 1991 for a history of post-world war II immigration into Europe.

⁵⁷ Subsequent laws added further restrictions. Further these immigration laws need to be viewed in conjunction with a series of Nationality Acts that progressively whittled away at the citizenship rights of

Middle Eastern countries.⁵⁸ The overwhelming majority of non-European immigrants in Continental countries are Muslims, mostly of rural origin imported to meet the needs of postwar industrial expansion.⁵⁹ Islam is the second largest religion in France, and the third largest in Britain.⁶⁰ Increasingly, the Muslim presence in Western Europe has

immigrants from New Commonwealth countries. See Zig Layton-Henry, The Politics of Immigration. Blackwell, Oxford, 1992 for an extensive account of the history and politics of British immigration. See also Colin Holmes, A Tolerant Country? Immigrants, Refugees and Minorities in Britain. Faber and Faber, London, 1991; Kathryn Manzo, "Turnip Seeds in the Parsnip Fields: British Empire and Island Nation", in Kathryn Manzo, Creating Boundaries: The Politics of Race and Nation. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1996; Rohit Barot, "Migration, Change and Indian Religions in Britain", in W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld, The Integration of Islam and Hinduism in Western Europe. Kok Pharos Publishing House, the Netherlands, 1991; and Jorgen S. Nielsen, "United Kingdom", in Muslims in Western Europe. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1992 for a discussion of different immigration and nationality acts in Britain. The immigration issue is put in better perspective when one realizes that (a) the majority of immigrants and refugees who came after world war II were white (Holmes, 1991; pp. 3) and (b) despite all the rhetoric on the flooding of immigrants into Britain, in every year since 1871, Britain has been a net exporter of population. (Holmes, 1991; pp. 98) It may be interesting to point out here, especially in light of (a) above that, in many Western states, the word "immigrant" is identified by public opinion with non-European settlers, often applied even to the offsprings of these immigrants who have been born in the country, but almost never applies to white immigrants. This is most prominently the case in Britain. Harry Golbourne argues that the most powerful and influential attempts to redefine post-imperial British national community has excluded the "legitimate" presence of non-White minorities, even if their presence has been accorded formal or legal recognition. Further, the power of this redefinition has been almost entirely ceded to the political and the intellectual right, since more progressive individuals and groups (linked to the 'race relations' industry) have been hesitant to address this issue. (Harry Goulbourne, Ethnicity and Nationalism in Post-Imperial Britain. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1991.) It is in the late 1960s that the blatantly racist and anti-(black)immigrant Conservative politician Enoch Powell (known in particular for his infamous "rivers of blood" speech) became enormously popular and prominent. Though Powell was subsequently dismissed from the Conservative shadow government at the time, his growing influence and popularity must have played some part in the passing of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act by the Labour government. See Frank Reeves, British Racial Discourse: A Study of British Political Discourse about Race and Race-Related Matters. Cambridge University Press, London, 1983 for an excellent analysis of the underlying racism in British debates on immigration on the part of both Conservative Party and Labour Party parliamentarians and politicians.

⁵⁸ as well as some immigration for family reunification of earlier labour immigrants.

⁵⁹ The concentration of Muslims in different West European countries reflects different national and cultural origins, largely explained by different colonial histories. For instance, Sweden and West Germany have seen predominantly Turkish immigration, France has had an influx of immigrants from the Maghreb, the Netherlands has a large percentage of Southeast Asian Muslim immigrants, and Great Britain has a large immigrant population of South Asian (mostly Pakistani and Bangladeshi) Muslim origin. In addition to the ethnic, cultural and national diversity among Muslims in Western Europe, there are also significant religious differences. Apart from the dominant Sunnite and Shi'ite divisions, there are also divisions among different sects and movements, as among the Deobandis and Barelwis in Britain. (See John Rex, "Religion and Ethnicity in the Metropolis", in Rohit Barot (ed.), Religion and Ethnicity: Minorities and Social Change in the Metropolis. Kok Pharos Publishing House, the Netherlands, 1993; see especially pp. 23-25).

⁶⁰ Estimates of religious populations are difficult to obtain, since most West European countries do not include a question on religious affiliation in official surveys. The Muslim population of Britain is estimated from anywhere between one and two million in different studies, constituting 2-4 per cent of the

become both more permanent and visible. There are now sizable settler Muslim communities from the Middle East, Africa and Asia in many West European countries, with some cities like Bradford in Britain and Marseilles in France seeing the increased participation of Muslim groups in local politics.⁶¹

The salience of the 'Islamic issue' in Europe arises not merely from the growing physical presence of Muslims, but from the concrete demands that Muslims, organized largely in mosque institutions, have increasingly come to place on the state - demands for provisions for burial procedures, worship times and places, ritualistic animal slaughter, education of children, etc. Institutionalized measures for ensuring the building

British electorate. In an article critiquing the different enumeration methods used in most studies, Ceri Peach argues that most existing figures are exaggerated, the actual figure being closer to 550,000 and 750,000. (Ceri Peach, "The Muslim Population of Great Britain", Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 13, No. 3, July 1990; pp. 414-419) This is a young and growing population. The vast majority of British Muslims are of working class background, and in general economically disadvantaged. For an extensive qualitative and quantitative analysis of the structural disadvantages faced by ethnic minorities in Britain, which also includes some differentiations by religion, and covers issues from employment, housing, health to language and culture, see Tariq Modood, Richard Berthoud et al, Ethnic Minorities in Britain: Diversity and Disadvantage. Policy Studies Institute. London. 1997. Tariq Modood has been one of the strongest critics of the failure of government, organizations and scholars to disaggregate race and ethnicity by the category of religion. He believes that anti-racism is bound to fail "if we remain wedded to a concept of racism that sees only colour-discrimination..." Modood asserts that Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in Britain have suffered the most among all non-white groups from structural disadvantages in employment, education, immigration laws and rules, housing, and physical harassment, and constitute the most distinct "racial underclass" in Britain. (See Tariq Modood, "British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair", The Political Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 2, April-June 1990; pp. 143-160; pp. 157) One of the consequences of this failure to disaggregate by the category of religion is that present day British law on discrimination (The Race Relations Act) can make racial, but not religious, discrimination illegal. As Eileen Barker points out, the debate over Sikh cultural rights (for schoolboys to wear turbans to school) evidenced this contradiction, when the first ruling against Sikh rights was made on the basis that the Sikhs did not constitute a 'racial' group (even though Jews did). Eventually, the House of Lords allowed an appeal against the decision on the basis that the Sikhs could be defined as an 'ethnic' group. (Eileen Barker, "The British Right to Discriminate", in Thomas Robbins and Roland Robertson (ed.), Church-State Relations: Tensions and Transitions. Transaction Books, New Brunswick. 1987. This issue reflects the contradictions inherent in the process of defining social groups, particularly where there is a failure to recognize the manner in which religious groups can be 'racialized'.

⁶¹ In Britain for instance, the demographic concentration of Asian Muslims in particular areas gives them significant political leverage at the level of the ward in local council elections, and in particular constituencies in parliamentary elections (although due to the absence of a proportional representation system, the latter may not translate into significant influence at the national level). Both the Conservative and the Labour parties have departments to deal specifically with Asian (and Black) voting issues, and have had to increasingly address "Muslim issues".

of mosques⁶², slaughtering in the ritually prescribed way⁶³, having schoolgirls exempted from co-education classes, etc. have been demanded and to some extent met. Such demands have also encountered great resistance, but much more significantly this resistance is expressed in terms of a challenge to 'core' national values, and taken as indicative of the marginal relation of ethnic and religious minorities to mainstream national values. Not surprisingly, education has been one of the most significant and politicized sites where the issue of secularism and religious tolerance has been tested.⁶⁴

⁶² See John Eade, "The Political Articulation of Community and the Islamisation of Space in London", in Rohit Barot (ed.), Religion and Ethnicity: Minorities and Social Change in the Metropolis. Kok Pharos Publishing House, the Netherlands, 1993 for an excellent analysis of case studies in two areas of London in which the public debate on the issue of the construction of mosques led to a discourse on community belonging that took a religio-cultural form, pitting the white residents of the areas or the 'real locals' (uniting "well healed gentrifiers and working class 'Cockneys' in a defence of tradition"; pp. 40) against the 'alien' encroachments of Muslim outsiders or the 'foreigners'. Eade's analysis is excellent in demonstrating how the 'physical presence' of Muslims and Islam politicizes 'space' and 'community' around a discourse of race. Mosques in particular have been politicized because they have served not just as places of worship, but also for building of community, organizations, networks providing services and organizing issues and demands for Muslims in Britain and elsewhere. See Jorgen S. Nielson, "Islamic Communities in Britain", in Paul Badham (ed.), Religion, State and Society in Modern Britain. The Edwin Mellen Press., Lewiston, 1989 (especially pp. 230-233) for a discussion of different mosque-based and other organizations and political movements of British Muslims. See also Daniele Joly, Britannia's Crescent: Making Place for Muslims in British Society. Avebury, Aldershot, 1995 for a detailed discussion of such organizations in Birmingham and Philip Lewis, Islamic Britain: Religion, Politics and Identity among British Muslims. I.B. Tauris Publishers, London, 1994 for a comprehensive account of such resources in Bradford. (Birmingham and Bradford contain some of the heaviest concentrations of British Muslim populations, and the majority of this population is concentrated within a few inner city electoral wards.) Gilles Kepel argues that the mosques that sprang up in the early years of post-world war immigration were encouraged by the British state in order to stabilize these communities and make them into a more efficient and compliant workforce, and worked as well as a form of communalism that marked off the proletarian Muslim populations from the native working class, thus preventing class solidarity. (See Gilles Kepel, trans. by Susan Milner, Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1997; see especially Part II "The Britannic Verses") It is only later that mosques became problematic as they started becoming centers for political activity.

⁶³ See Charles Husbands, "The Political Context of Muslim Communities' Participation in British Society", in Bernard Lewis and Dominique Schnapper (ed.), Muslims in Europe. Pinter Publishers, London, 1994. for a brief anecdotal account of the introduction of *halal* meats into two local education authority's schools, that raised outcries across the spectrum from animal rights activists to those who expressed "cultural revulsion" at barbaric practices. Interestingly, as Husband points out, much of the anti-*halal* rhetoric made possible an easy slippage from the argument that ritual slaughter was barbaric to the implicit corollary that Muslims were barbaric.

⁶⁴ As one of the most important of the ideological state apparatuses in the reproduction of hegemony, the school becomes one of the most important sites for the construction of the "secular imagined community" Hence the issue of control over schools and school curriculum is one of the most contentious in many modern nation-states. In Britain for instance, Muslim attempts to acquire 'voluntary aided status' for their schools (that would remain under the control of a religious institution, but receive the bulk of the running costs from

The issue of 'multicultural education' has arisen in response to the recognition of the ethnic, racial, religious and cultural diversity of British society. It is interesting to explore in this context how effective multicultural education has been in accommodating issues of religious diversity.

Multicultural Education and the Question of Religious Education in Britain

The explicit recognition and acknowledgement of differences underlies the move from an assimilationist project in the 1960s to the multiculturalism of the 1970s. The British Race Relations Acts of 1968 and 1976 recognize the multi-ethnic nature of British society and reflect formal institutional attempts to promote better community relations.⁶⁵ Multiculturalism, as a policy goal in the educational system, was an attempt to accommodate this diversity within the schooling system, less perhaps from an ideological commitment to diversity and more as an attempt to deal with practical problems posed by the existence of diversity.⁶⁶ Not surprisingly, this attempt was soon confronted with the question of the 'religious identity' of the British nation.

public funds) have met with strong resistance, even though large numbers of voluntary aided religious schools for other religions - Roman Catholic, Church of England, Jewish, and Methodist - exist. The demand for state subvention for Muslim schools, as is allowed for other religious schools, has repeatedly been refused, on the claim that such schools are 'substandard' (overlooking the effect of chronic underfunding on school quality). It has also been argued that such schools would increase social divides between different communities. (See "Muslim Schools: Choosing God," in The Economist, December 19th, 1992; and "All God's Children," in The Economist, April 30th, 1996) (I seem to recall that this situation has changed very recently, but haven't been able to verify that as yet.) Similarly in France, the public sector education system claims to enshrine the republican and laicist tradition of French identity, and those who have not wanted to take part in this tradition have usually been Roman Catholic, for whom the Catholic network of 'free' schools has been available. The 'headscarves affair' that brought up the question of Muslim cultural values with respect to French identity partly became so contentious because state schools were seen as one of the most effective assimilationist or integrationist tools for Muslim immigrants from North Africa.

⁶⁵ Unlike France, ethnicity and ethnic (although not religious) minorities are formally recognized in official data collection in Britain.

⁶⁶ In Britain, multiculturalism as a policy goal has been widely criticized by commentators on the left including minority activists as part of the attempt to coopt cultural differences into the established ideological structure. These criticisms, undergirding the more radical 'anti-racist philosophy', pointed to how the notion of cultural pluralism did not confront structural inequalities. This anti-racist philosophy

The multicultural goal in education was reflected in the Swann Commission Report. The publication in 1985 of the Swann report (a government commission chaired by Lord Swann was set up in response to poor performance of ethnic minority children) entitled 'Education for All' was criticized both by English parents and communities for giving precedence to ethnic minority concerns, and by Muslim communities (that acknowledged its good intentions) for dealing with Muslim demands in terms of 'culture' and 'ethnicity' rather than in terms of the fundamental disagreements of religion and religious beliefs. However, the report did attempt to take the issue of cultural diversity in education seriously, reflected in particular in its position on the question of religious education.

One of the areas in school policy that has been particularly controversial and politicized has been in the area of 'religious education' in schools, which had traditionally been Christian and bible-based according to the understanding underlying the 1944 Education Act, but with growing communities of non-Christian communities in school districts, had been increasingly expanded through the late 1970s and early 1980s to include multi-faith issues. Related to this was the question of the role and content of the legally required collective worship at the start of each school day.⁶⁷ The Swann report had praised 'religious education' for taking multicultural education seriously, and recommended its continuation along those lines. However, during the debate over the Education Reform Act in the House of Lords following the publication of the Swann report, the provisions for religious education and school worship became a major controversial point with pressures brought from a section of the House to reintroduce the

met with strong political assault from the New Right in the late 1980s, especially in the wake of the Rushdie affair.

Christian nature of religious education. Eventually, the government capitulated to these pressures, accepting new clauses on religious education and school worship that required a mainly or broadly Christian focus, with some space provided for other religions.⁶⁸ The 1988 Education Reform Act in some sense became the vehicle for propagating the (Christian) nationalist/culturalist agenda of the Tory party, affirming Christianity as the 'cultural core' of the British nation.

The problem of multiculturalism in Britain arises in one sense from the vocalization of the demands of non-white immigrants from previous colonies, using the guarantees and rights of a self-proclaimed liberal society to disturb the ideological complacency of the existing state apparatus. In the context of religious minorities, this has had the effect of confronting the existing ideological consensus with the limits of a self-professed and celebrated secularism. Even though public outcries against immigrations have used their 'lack of assimilation' as a rallying cry, complete assimilation is neither intended nor possible within ideological hegemony. In fact, ideological hegemony, as argued in the next chapter, has always required the construction of a 'cultural core' against various internal and external differences.⁶⁹ While external

⁶⁷ There is also the question of religious influences in the substantive content of the curriculum. However, I do not have any information on this issue.

⁶⁸ There is some leeway for schools to apply for exemption on the basis that this clause would not be appropriate to their communities. See Jorgen S. Nielsen, "United Kingdom", in Muslims in Western Europe. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh. 1992 and Gilles Kepel, "Britishness and Identity", in Gilles Kepel, Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe, Stanford University Press. Stanford, 1997: see especially pp. 109-11 and pp. 118-125. This however, only confirms the existence of a (Christian) 'norm' *against which* 'difference' has to be claimed.

⁶⁹ The interesting issue here is that theoretically the liberal, secular nation-state consists of an aggregate of 'citizens', each enjoying identical political rights, so that religious communities belong, strictly speaking, to civil and not to political society - that is to the private, rather than the public realm. So the idea that the population of a modern nation-state must be committed to 'core values', belongs to a discourse about the limits of political society. (Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993) But it is through civil society, as elaborated on in the next chapter, that ideological hegemony is ultimately established, and it is

differences have always helped to construct a sense of internal homogeneity, internal differences have remained crucial. So 'internal diversity' is to an extent encouraged and this indeed was the project of state multiculturalism, but only to the extent that it did not destabilize the accepted hierarchy.⁷⁰

The 'Muslim problem' in Britain, and Western Europe more generally, arises because in making organized, collective, *cultural* demands of the state, Muslims are destabilizing this accepted hierarchy, and refusing to stay within the acceptable parameters of 'internal diversity'. It is even more problematic that this threat to cultural hegemony arises from an 'inferior Islamic other', since this disturbs the Orientalist framework of Anglo-European hegemony, as the 'external other' that provides cohesion to British (or European) identity comes to haunt the 'inside'. This is the effect that Balibar has called the "interiorization of the exterior" or the creation within Western European nation-states of "third-world within" effects.⁷¹ Further, since the existing mode of dealing with nonwhite minorities in Britain is through the category of 'race' and 'ethnicity', the liberal political system (based on a party system that is organized around class politics) has been preoccupied with questions of distributive justice, and has been less able to confront such 'cultural issues' that are presented in the language of

the disturbance of that hegemony that threatens the always tentative unity and cohesion of the nation-state, and hence becomes a problem. Peter Jones points out that contemporary liberalism categorizes religious beliefs as "conceptions of the good", which are to be pursued within the constraints set by non-religious rules of "right". Yet, many religions themselves constitute their own systems of right, which have implications for their visions of the public rules of the society. (Peter Jones, "Rushdie, Race and Religion," in Political Studies, XXXVIII, 1990; 687-694: pp. 690) In some senses, liberalism's limits could be tested by the existence of such religions. However, demands made by Muslim communities in Britain have hardly attempted to restructure the existing "rules of right".

⁷⁰ In that sense, it is *not* the case that "(t)he monocultural myth of the national culture predisposes it *against* a multicultural model...". (Jorgen S. Nielsen, "European Muslims in a New Europe?", in Muslims in Western Europe. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh. 1992; pp. 153, my italics)

⁷¹ Etienne Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism" and "The Nation Form: History and Ideology", in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities, Verso, London, 1991.

'traditions' and 'identities'.⁷² Hence, as will be shown below in the case of the Rushdie affair, both conservative and liberal political opinion are ill-equipped to deal with many of the issues that are posed by such cultural questions, and end up responding in sometimes characteristically and other times surprisingly, ethnocentric and racist ways.

In recent years, the increased political visibility of Muslims has led to a growing anti-Arab/Muslim sentiment in Western Europe. At one level, this is reflected in the extent to which 'assimilation' of Muslims and immigration from North Africa and Turkey have become explosive political issues in many states. This is also reflected on discussions within the European community where it has been deemed necessary to have a common policy on 'third country' immigrants and in discussions of the unacceptability of Turkey for EC membership because of its Muslim character.⁷³ At another level, this hostility toward Muslims is seen in the revival of aggressive and racist neo-nationalisms in many parts of Europe. There have been extreme and often violent racist reactions recently to migration and toward Muslim immigrants in Belgium, France, Italy, Germany and Britain. Electoral successes of ultra-right groups and parties in recent years has led to their presence in both national parliaments and the European parliament.

There have been numerous 'episodes' within Western European nation-states involving Muslims that have brought into prominence cultural issues of national identity. I now turn to briefly look at the 'Rushdie affair' in Britain as one particularly contentious

⁷² See Talal Asad, "Multiculturalism and the British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair", in Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993.

⁷³ Among third country immigrants a distinction is made between citizens of OECD countries and non-OECD countries, the latter group facing more restricted entry. See Dietrich Thranhardt and Robert Miles, "Introduction: European integration, migration and processes of inclusion and exclusion", in Robert Miles and Dietrich Thranhardt, Migration and European Integration: The Dynamics of Inclusion and Exclusion.

and internationalized instance of this. If the politicization of Islam within Britain could at all be ignored until then, the Rushdie affair made the 'religious identity' of ethnic minorities an irreversibly political question. It is interesting that for Daniel Pipes, who has written extensively on the subject, "(t)he Rushdie affair underlined the fact that both secularism and freedom of expression remain essentially Western phenomena."⁷⁴ Yet, in many ways, the significance of the Rushdie affair lies in the manner in which it revealed the fissures and gaps in a taken-for-granted British secularism, by bringing the issue of 'religious difference' into the center of political debate. In other words, I find it interesting to use the Rushdie affair to raise questions on Western religious tolerance, when the event was portrayed widely in the West as an attack of Islamic fundamentalism *against* Western tolerance.

The Rushdie Affair

"The Rushdie incident prompted a confrontation of Christian and Islamic civilizations the likes of which had not been seen in centuries"⁷⁵

"Rushdie...stands at the centre of such large battles as those between Christianity and Islam, secularism and fundamentalism, Europe and its ex-colonies, the host society and its immigrants, the post and pre-modernists, art and religion, and between skepticism and faith".⁷⁶

Pinter Publishers. London, 1995. See also "Migration and the new Europe" (special section; guest editor: Robert Miles). *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 3, July 1993.

⁷⁴ Daniel Pipes, *The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West*. Birch Lane Press, New York, 1990; see pp. 211. Pipes makes this assertion on the grounds that even in countries like India, which were legally secular, *The Satanic Verses* was banned in the interest of social harmony. As he goes on to say in the very next sentence, "(t)he power of religious leaders revealed the weak hold of secularism, even in countries where it was enshrined as a legal document." (pp. 211) For Pipes, this was one more confirming instance of the Western Secularism/Eastern Fundamentalism opposition.

⁷⁵ Daniel Pipes, *The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West*. Birch Lane Press, New York, 1990; see pp. 240.

⁷⁶ Bhikhu Parekh, "The Rushdie Affair: Research Agenda for Political Philosophy", in *Political Studies*, XXXVIII, 1990; 695-709. I should begin by pointing to some of the ironies in this troubled location of Salman Rushdie, the author. Rushdie, as a black (and born as a Muslim), British citizen (of South Asian origin), has been a consistently strong voice for Black/Muslim/Minority issues in Britain, and a very vocal critic of Margaret Thatcher and her policies (including in the book itself). *The Satanic Verses* itself is a book about the immigrant experience in a racist society. His being singled out for attack definitely had

The publication of Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses despite objections made to Penguin by Muslim groups, the resulting demonstrations in many parts of the world including the celebrated Bradford book-burning episode, and the issuing of the *fatwa* (religious edict) by Ayatollah Khomeini against Rushdie, brought up much public debate and commentary in the Western world. The Rushdie affair had important policy implications, as diplomatic ties with Iran were severed by many European countries, soon after diplomatic and trade relations between Iran and Europe had been strengthened after the cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq war in August 1988. In many ways, the dissenting voices to the image of a monolithic Islamic threat were drowned out in this episode that gave a new lease of life to the confrontational image of an Islam vs. the West. What I want to focus on here is the response to this 'episode' *within* British society,⁷⁷ and how that

something to do with the public stature and success he has achieved as a critical writer. For a writer, who has consistently pointed to the holes in British identity and politics, he was attacked in the aftermath of The Satanic Verses for "selling out" to the British establishment, and was eventually defended and accorded protection by the Thatcher government on the basis of his "British citizenship". For a collection of reviews, interviews and stories on Salman Rushdie that appeared in the Western press at the time of the Rushdie affair, see "The Author and the Book", in Lisa Appignanesi and Sara Maitland, The Rushdie File, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1990. I draw on the Appignanesi and Maitland collection quite extensively for primary materials on this issue.

⁷⁷ Different countries around the world responded differently to the book. Even before Khomeini's fatwa, many Muslim countries banned the book. Egypt had done so quietly in November, 1988 and even after Khomeini issued his statement, religious scholars at Cairo's al-Azhar University (reputed to be an esteemed place of Islamic learning) insisted that Rushdie must first be given a trial and the opportunity to repent. Turkey was the only Muslim majority state where the book was not banned. India, with a sizeable Muslim population, had also decided to ban the book by October, 1988, which, as we will see in chapter seven, was later used by Hindu nationalists as an example of "appeasement of Muslims" by the 'secular' Congress government. Many other countries with a substantial Muslim population also banned the book, including Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Sri Lanka, Kenya, Tanzania, Liberia, Sierra Leone and South Africa, as did some countries with a negligible Muslim population such as Venezuela and Japan. The U.S. government took a much more (in comparison to Britain, and some other European countries) measured stand on the book, appreciating its offensiveness to Muslims, but upholding the right of free speech and condemning Khomeini's edict. Different European countries also responded differently. In Netherlands, the government initiated a dialogue with Muslim organizations, while in France an active press debate on Islam, laicism and religious freedom took place. In Sweden, however, strong Muslim protests raised Swedish resentment against the "ingratitude" of a "favourably treated" Muslim community, while in Norway an old debate about religious freedom, earlier raised in the context of plans to build a mosque in Oslo, was revived. (See Jorgen S. Nielsen, "A Brief History", in Muslims in Western Europe, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1992; see pp. 156-162; and Daniel Pipes, The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the

highlights some very interesting and significant issues with respect to British identity and its unstable and contradictory nature.

While there had been voices of protest from Islamic organizations in Britain to the publication of the book, and other public protests and demonstrations as well, the issue did not come into public prominence till a copy of the book was publicly burned during a demonstration in Bradford on 14th January, 1989⁷⁸, which was exacerbated by Khomeini's *fatwa* on the death sentence for the author a month later.⁷⁹ Immediately, the

Ayatollah, and the West. Birch Lane Press, New York, 1990) For a collection of government positions and press reactions in different countries, see "The International Response", in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990. However, even where many governments, Muslim leaders and other public figures around the world took a stand against the book, and supported its ban, most also did not support Khomeini's position on the issue. Many Muslim writers and intellectuals publicly supported Rushdie, and condemned Khomeini.

⁷⁸ The associations made between this event and the book-burning episodes in Nazi Germany (and the Inquisition) did much to politicize the issue, and inflame public passions. Immediately, Muslims were branded in the press as 'barbarians', 'uncivilized', 'fundamentalists', 'fanatics', and compared to the Nazis. As Bhikhu Parekh points out, "(n)o one cared to point out that only a few months earlier, several Labour Members of Parliament had burnt a copy of the new immigration rules outside the House of Commons without raising so much as a murmur of protest, or that on occasion the Prime Minister's effigy had been hanged with such silly slogans as 'Hang the Bitch'." (Bhikhu Parekh, "The Rushdie Affair: Research Agenda for Political Philosophy", in Political Studies, XXXVIII, 1990; 695-709: pp. 699) Similarly, in speaking of hostile reactions to the Rushdie affair in Europe, Daniel Pipes notes the stimulation of "street violence – such acts as a bomb thrown against the mosque in Regent's park, *the symbolic burning of the Qur'an*, and riots." (Daniel Pipes, 1990; pp. 228, my italics). Not only does Pipes himself conveniently gloss over these other instances of "book burnings", but nowhere else does this also receive any prominence.

⁷⁹For the Tehran position on Rushdie and the book, see "The Khomeini *Fatwa*", in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990. The reasons for Khomeini's position are complex. Some authors have traced it to political factionalism, in which the more hard-line, anti-Western faction within the Iranian political elite was able to use the issue to reverse the trend towards normalization of relations with the West, as well as to reclaim the loss of Islamic leadership to the rising influence of Saudi Arabia. Muslim organizations and leaders in Britain took a variety of different stands on the issue, many supporting the ban on the book, as well as condemning Khomeini's *fatwa*, even though as I will show later, this diversity was neglected by the media that focussed almost entirely on the extremist positions. However, I am less interested here in the response of Muslims to the book, than in the response of British society to the response of Muslims. For the Muslim perspectives on the issue, see M.M. Ahsan and A.R. Kidwai, Sacrilege versus Civility: Muslim Perspectives on *The Satanic Verses* Affair, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1991. For an extensive collection of press articles in India and Britain protesting the publication of the book, as well as protesting efforts to ban the book (including an article by Rushdie published in the Observer), see "The Mounting Protest" as well as "Reflections", in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990. Peter Beyer sees the response of Khomeini and other Muslims who were opposed to the *Satanic Verses* as "part of a much larger Muslim effort to counter inequalities within the global system through the revitalization of Islamic particularity". The resistance Beyer points to is to a globalization in which Muslims were being asked to surrender their faith "as the price for full inclusion in a global system currently dominated by non-Muslims", and in that sense negating Muslims as actors in global society. (Peter Beyer, Religion and Globalization, Sage Publications, London, 1994; pp. 3.)

press started an extensive and intense coverage of what subsequently came to be dubbed “the Rushdie affair”. At the same time, representatives of the Thatcher government also made a series of public pronouncements on the issue. Let me highlight what this response of the British government, the press and public opinion revealed about various aspects of British secular identity.

The Inadequacies of Secular Law

At a most basic level, The Rushdie affair revealed some of the ambiguities of secular law. For instance, as part of the historical settlement between the Church of England and the state, “blasphemy laws” in Britain protect Anglican Christianity. This privilege is not accorded to any other religion. The extension of these laws to Islam and other minority religions became one of the central demands of many Muslim groups and leaders in the wake of the Rushdie affair. When Muslim leaders demanded the extension of the blasphemy laws on the grounds that it was discriminatory, it provoked a variety of responses.⁸⁰ A clearly articulated Conservative position argued against the extension on the grounds that Britain was essentially Christian.⁸¹ Some liberals, who agreed with the Muslim charge of discrimination, also agreed with the extension of the laws, while many

⁸⁰ For an interesting, short article that speaking from a Jewish-feminist perspective, calls for empathy to the Muslim position (while eschewing violence) on the basis of a comparison of ‘blasphemy’ to ‘pornography’ (as it has arisen in feminist debates), see Letty Cottin Pogrebb, “The Rushdie riddle”, *Ms. Magazine*, July/Aug. 1989 as reproduced in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990; pp. 238-240.

⁸¹ There had been an attempt in 1978 to abolish the blasphemy law, but the House of Lords rejected it on the grounds that Britain, its institutions and the monarchy were still *essentially Christian* and deserve protection by the law, and that abolition could lead to an abundance of blasphemous publications. (from Anthony Dyson, “Looking Below the Surface” in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), *The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective*. Edwin Mellon Press, New York, 1990; pp. 68)

called for the abolition of the law altogether.⁸² The Home Office made it clear that the Government was not considering any changes in the scope of the blasphemy laws.

In a sense both the alternatives of granting of privilege to the majority religion (Church of England), as well as the demand for abolition of privileges to all religious groups, do not recognize how structural power can distort the adequate workings of a liberal polity, so that it is minority religious groups that are particularly vulnerable and might thereby require additional protection. The responses to the Rushdie affair were marked by this failure to recognize the ‘position of vulnerability’ in British society from where Muslims articulated their protests and concerns. For instance, when Daniel Pipes points out that “blasphemy” with respect to Christianity is part of the daily life in Europe and America, and does not elicit such outrage (which he juxtaposes in his characteristically ethnocentric way to the “literal-mindedness” of Muslims), he erases completely the issue of power by not recognizing the context within which a religiously and culturally threatened minority felt blasphemed by the use of language and stereotype that had historically formed the arsenal of Western representations of Islam.⁸³ Pipes’ position also clearly fails to address why then should the Church of England enjoy such protection. As Paul Weller points out, the privileged position of the Church of England represents “the symbolic expression of the complicated nexus of religious, cultural, social, and political strands which make up the ethos and the unwritten constitution of the

⁸² See “The International Response”, in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990 for coverage of these positions. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Robert Runcie, expressed sympathy for Muslim sentiments, and even though he had previously supported the extension of the law against blasphemy to cover religions other than Christianity, he did not explicitly do so on this occasion. See Paul Weller, “The Rushdie Controversy and Inter-Faith Relations” in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective. Edwin Mellon Press, New York, 1990; pp. 40-47; and Bhikhu Parekh, “The Rushdie Affair: Research Agenda for Political Philosophy”, in Political Studies, XXXVIII, 1990; 695-709; pp. 701-704 for a discussion of some of these issues. Even though the blasphemy laws do not extend to Judaism, the Jewish people, recognized as a racial group, are in one sense protected by race-relations legislation.

⁸³ Daniel Pipes, 1990; see pp. 106-113.

British state...As the largest religious minority in Britain, Muslims have come up against this nexus whenever they have attempted to advocate changes to accommodate Islam in the educational and legal system of Britain.”⁸⁴ When confronted with the demands of a highly vocal and politicized religious minority, the decision of the government to not extend the blasphemy law confirmed this privileged place of Christianity within the secular British order.

The ‘Otherness’ of Muslims

During the height of the Rushdie controversy, newspapers and television almost unanimously condemned the ‘fundamentalism’ of Britain’s Muslims.⁸⁵ The conservative press was clearly open and explicit in its anti-Muslim rhetoric. Liberal public opinion crystallized around the issue of “freedom of speech”, asserted as an essential and non-negotiable part of British society.⁸⁶ Previously strong supporters of multiculturalism, like

⁸⁴ Paul Weller, “The Rushdie Controversy and Inter-Faith Relations” in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective. Edwin Mellon Press, New York, 1990; pp. 54.

⁸⁵ For a collection of press articles on this issue, see “The International Response” and “Reflections”, in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990. For an analysis of the press coverage of the Rushdie affair, see Simon Cottle, “Reporting the Rushdie affair: a case study in the orchestration of public opinion,” in Race and Class, 32, 4, 1991; pp. 45-64; and Bhikhu Parekh, “The Rushdie Affair and the British Press”, in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective. Edwin Mellon Press, New York, 1990.

⁸⁶ It is not clear why freedom of expression was held up as such an absolute, when there are clear limits placed on it in the context of race relations, pornography, personal libel, national security, and as pointed out before, blasphemy against Christianity. For instance, Peter Wright’s freedom to publish Spycatcher was challenged by the government, the screening of Death of a Princess on British television was halted because of the Saudi threat of trade sanctions against Britain, a play between Jews and Hitler called Perdition was banned, Gerry Adams’ speeches on television and radio are banned, etc. Ali Mazrui points to some of these contradictions in the free speech position in Ali A. Mazrui, “The moral dilemma of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*”, in Appignanesi and Maitland; pp. 202-210) Asad raises a very interesting point in that the (uncontroversial) existence of laws on patents, copyrights (of music, images, texts), contracts in restraint of trade, protection of trade secrets, and intellectual property all demonstrate that the ‘right to property’ clearly takes precedence over the ‘right of free expression’ in the “British way of life”. (Talal Asad, “Multiculturalism and the British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair”, in Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993) Several writers and authors around the world also wrote extensively on the issue framed in terms of “freedom of expression”, although some of these writers clearly recognized the limits of a liberal polity in this regard. See Steve MacDonough (ed.), The Rushdie Letters: Freedom to

ex-labour secretary Roy Jenkins, publicly questioned the soundness of his early policies that had prevented the “blending” in of Muslims and their culture and religion into British society.⁸⁷ Dr. John Habgood, Archbishop of York, was much more explicit in rejecting the concept of a multi-faith society, and recognizing the Christian character of Britain.⁸⁸ But the general brandishing of Muslims as intolerant and fanatical spanned the political spectrum in the popular press, and the entire debate got centered around the ‘fit’ of Muslims in a (Christian) liberal society, sometimes Christian tolerance clearly juxtaposed against Muslim intolerance.⁸⁹

What is interesting of course is the ease with which the press and the public slipped into racist stereotyping of Muslims. As Bhikhu Parekh points out, “(I)t was depressing to note how the legitimate rage against the Ayatollah’s murderous impertinence and outrageous Muslim support for it escalated step by even sillier step to a wholly mindless anger first against all *Bradford* Muslims, then against all *British* Muslims, then against all *Muslims*, and ultimately against *Islam* itself.⁹⁰ Some of the press commentary on Khomeini’s position took a characteristically and familiar

Speak, Freedom to Write. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1993 for a collection of commentaries by very prominent writers. (Of all the letters in the volume, there is only one by Fahimeh Farsaie, who criticizes Rushdie and the entire response to the issue for neglecting the situation of the many writers around the world who continued to be silenced and persecuted without ever receiving any media attention.) Similarly, see the “World Writer’s Statement”, signed by thousands of literary figures around the world, as reproduced in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990; pp. 109-112, as well as several other pieces by renowned writers in the book. (See in particular Edward Said’s eloquent defence of Rushdie, but from a place that recognizes the Muslim anguish in witnessing a member of their culture, and speaking from the “inside” so to speak, “join the legions of Orientalists in Orientalizing Islam so radically and unfairly”. Edward S. Said in a statement made at a public meeting on 22nd February, 1989, as reproduced in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990; pp. 164-6) Other than some notable exceptions, much of the commentary on free speech that was raised with respect to this issue failed to examine the context of power within which speech occurs.

⁸⁷ from Gilles Kepel, “The Rushdie Affair”, in Gilles Kepel, Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1997

⁸⁸ from Paul Weller, “The Rushdie Controversy and Inter-Faith Relations” in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective. Edwin Mellon Press, New York, 1990; 52-3.

⁸⁹ See Bhikhu Parekh, “The Rushdie Affair and the British Press”, in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective. Edwin Mellon Press, New York, 1990

confrontational stance, as Anthony Burgess said “(t)o order outraged sons of the prophet to kill him and the directors of Penguin Books on British soil is tantamount to a *jihad*. It is a declaration of war on citizens of a free country...”⁹¹

Rather than raise legitimate questions about the role of religion in public life, this response to the Rushdie affair raised two kinds of questions, both of which reflect the limits of British secularism. First, questions raised about the incompatibility of Islam with Western liberalism makes one ask if ‘compatibility’ is always rendered problematic in the face of radical difference. On the face of it, there is no reason why Muslim demands (for the ban on publication, for the extension of blasphemy laws, etc.) could not be accommodated by the British state, or more importantly, why such demands even when they could not be accommodated, should be seen as ‘external to’ a liberal political system. Second, and relatedly, in raising questions on the place of Muslims and Islam in a Christian and post-Christian society, the response to the Rushdie affair clearly revealed the ‘cultural core’ that lies at the heart of a secular, liberal order, so that the ‘otherness’ of Muslims became constituted as the ‘radical difference’ that raised the first question of ‘compatibility’. As the next section discusses, the responses from both the political right and the left pointing to the underlying ‘Christian character’ of Britain spoke to this cultural issue.

Anglocentric/Christian ‘Cultural Core’

At the time of the Rushdie affair, a few significant public statements were made by government officials, and despite other political differences, were in general

⁹⁰ Bhikhu Parekh, “The Rushdie Affair and the British Press”, in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective. Edwin Mellon Press, New York, 1990; pp. 79.

applauded by the liberal middle classes. Douglas Hurd, the home secretary, made a speech in the immediate aftermath of Khomeini's death sentence at a gathering of Muslims, emphasizing the importance of proper integration for ethnic minorities, the need to learn about British culture without abandoning one's own faith, and the necessity of refraining from violence. A few months later, his deputy, John Patten, wrote an open letter along similar lines, to "a number of leading British Muslims" and two weeks after that, produced another document, entitled "On Being British", which was circulated to the news media.⁹² Asad raises the question of why such public pronouncements were deemed necessary and why they were applauded by the liberal middle classes who echoed much of the conservative sentiments on Muslim violence. The issue here was not that of 'law and order', and the coercive apparatus of the state did not have to be deployed in any great measure to deal with a physical threat. As Nielson points out, Hurd's exhortation to the Muslim community to stay within the law in their protests made little sense to a community which had the record of being among the most law-abiding in the country.⁹³ Further, racist murders against nonwhite immigrants and bombings by supporters of IRA, had not evoked a discourse on the "essential character of Britishness" by the government.

The significance of the statements lay much more in pointing to the underlying consensus on the cultural dimensions of Britishness, thereby establishing the "difference"

⁹¹ Anthony Burgess, "L 1,500,000 TO KILL HIM – by order of that Mad Mullah", Headline from Daily Mirror, London, 16th Feb., 1989, as reproduced in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990: pp. 79.

⁹² From Talal Asad, "Multiculturalism and the British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair", in Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993.

⁹³ See Jorgen S. Nielsen, "A Brief History", in Muslims in Western Europe, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1992; see pp. 156-162. Modood contends and goes to some length to demonstrate that "fundamentalism" is virtually non-existent amongst Asian Muslims in Britain, and played no part in the book-burnings and demonstrations. (Tariq Modood, "British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair", The Political Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 2, April-June 1990; pp. 143-160)

of Muslims and Islam in British society. Herein lay the limits of a liberal secularism, forced to reveal the hidden undertones of a religio-cultural core when confronted by a politicized, radical, religious difference. As Bhikhu Parekh points out:

“asking immigrants to acknowledge the authority of the established system of government and to obey its laws was one thing; to ask them to accept the prevailing form of life and become British in their ways of thought and life was altogether different. To equate the two was to confuse the state with the nation, a form of authority with a culture. Immigrants owed loyalty to the British state, but not to British values, customs and way of life.”⁹⁴

The ‘threat’ posed by ‘Muslim otherness’ was a threat to that ‘way of life’. Regardless of how it was presented by the media and politicians, Asad is quite clear that “the perceived danger is a matter neither of law and order nor of freedom of speech; it is a matter, rather, of the politicization of a religious tradition that has no place within the cultural hegemony that has defined British identity over the last century – especially as that tradition has come from a recent colonial society.”⁹⁵ In that sense, Asad believes that this politicization of religion by Muslims (paradoxically made possible by the liberal principle to “choose one’s faith”) is a much more radical threat to hegemonic British identity than the forms of ‘hybridity’ and ‘syncretism’ that Homi Bhabha and Paul Gilroy celebrate that is much more easily accommodated within the multicultural project of the British state. This threat is all the more acute because “people who do not accept the secular liberal values of the governing classes are nevertheless able to use the liberal

⁹⁴ Bhikhu Parekh, “The Rushdie Affair: Research Agenda for Political Philosophy”, in Political Studies, XXXVIII, 1990; 695-709: pp. 701. I address the conceptual differences between the ‘state’ and the ‘nation’ in the next chapter.

⁹⁵ Talal Asad, “Multiculturalism and the British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair”, in Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993; pp. 248.

language of equal rights in rational argument against the secular British elite, and to avail themselves of liberal law for instituting their own strongly held religious traditions”.⁹⁶

In availing of these liberal laws, what are Muslims “legitimately allowed”? Some of the questions that Daniel Pipes raises on Islam in Europe in the wake of the Rushdie affair answers that question.

“...the events of early 1989 marked the emergence of Muslims living in West Europe as a political force...The activism of Muslims during the Rushdie incident raised a host of new questions for Europeans: would the Muslims in their midst remain in ghettos of their own making, integrate themselves into Western life, or try to impose their political power and way of life on the majority population? Also, would they accept living in a secular order, or would try to change it into something more familiar to them?”⁹⁷

In other words, the choice is clear: a secular order in Britain already exists, constituted *prior* to the entry of Muslims, and Muslims may either “choose” to accept it (without participating in constituting it), or ‘reject’ it, thus brandishing them ‘fundamentalists’. Either way, they remained ‘outsiders’ to this secular (Christian) order. In other words, as Parekh points out, to put the burden on minorities (who were actively recruited to help rebuild the British post-war economy) to accept and adjust to the “British way of life”, rather than negotiating a consensus with them, was to deny such immigrants equal rights of citizenship.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ Talal Asad, “Multiculturalism and the British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair”, in Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993; pp. 265-8.

⁹⁷ Daniel Pipes, The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West. Birch Lane Press, New York, 1990; see pp. 214. In disapproving tones, he notes of Muslim demands for various concessions from the state as “Muslim ambition (that) goes beyond mere socio-economic improvement and distribution of spoils; it aims to affect the tenor of West European life”, clearly a serious threat in his view since “the Rushdie affair showed that they could exert pressure out of proportion to their numbers”. (pp. 217)

⁹⁸ After all, in Britain, unlike France, there is a distinction made between ‘citizenship’ and ‘nationality’. This is implicit in the recognition of Britain as a multi-national state, and the racial/ethnic categories that the state recognizes. See Gilles Kepel, Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1997: See especially Part II, “The Britannic Verses”, pp. 79-146.

To put this issue in context it is important to situate the responses to the Rushdie affair within the neo-Conservative political project of the Thatcher era that was not simply based on neo-liberal economic policies, but drew heavily upon neo-conservative ideologies that articulated 'race', 'empire' and 'nation' around a sense of an 'Anglocentric/Christian Britishness'.⁹⁹ If the 'danger' sensed by both the Tory government and 'liberal opinion'¹⁰⁰ in Britain in the wake of the Rushdie affair was "yet another symptom of postimperial British identity in crisis...",¹⁰¹ it was a postimperial identity heightened under the cultural politics of Thatcherism. This contemporary negotiation of a hegemonic postimperial British identity drew on a historically available repertoire of imagery and stereotypes, which located Islam and Muslims as alien to British life and culture. But contemporary discourses on the 'global threat of Islam', as elaborated on in the first part of this chapter, also provided ample resources for the articulation of this 'internal Muslim threat'. Hence, the reactions and demands of Muslims, despite dissensions¹⁰², could be seen both in a negative, essentializing light, and

⁹⁹ See Stuart Hall, "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists", in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (ed.), Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture, University of Illinois Press, 1988; and Charles Husband, "The Political Context of Muslim Communities' Participation in British Society", in Bernard Lewis and Dominique Schnapper (ed.), Muslims in Europe. Pinter Publishers, London, 1994. See Anna Marie Smith, New Right Discourse on Race and Sexuality: Britain, 1968-1990, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994 for an excellent account of the culturalist project of Thatcherism, in particular highlighting the salience of race and (homo)sexuality, as well as their interconnectedness, in that project. It is also important to point out here that the materially disadvantaged Muslim community was also severely hurt by the dismantling of the welfare state under the Thatcherite reforms.

¹⁰⁰ which has taken a much more measured stand on the 'Irish problem'.

¹⁰¹ Talal Asad, "Multiculturalism and the British Identity in the Wake of the Rushdie Affair", in Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993; pp. 241

¹⁰² As pointed out before there is no homogeneous Muslim community in Britain, given the divisions of nationality, ethnicity, professions, etc. It has been said that the only thing to have united Muslim communities within Britain has been the Rushdie affair. Muslim reactions to the event varied (there were many who critiqued both Rushdie's book and Khomeini's edict), but these diverse voices were ignored by the media that focussed on the strident, extremist positions, and a fixation on Khomeini. Different Islamic organizations and leaders in Britain took different positions on this issue, as did different Muslim countries. One of the political effects of the Rushdie affair was to bring the Saudi-Iranian rivalry on to Britain, as different organizations within Britain affiliated to the two countries took different stands on the issue, and were critical of each other. (See James Piscatori, "The Rushdie Affair and the Politics of Ambiguity", in International Affairs, 66, 4 ,

as disruptive of the liberal, secular, cultural hegemony of Britain. In Britain the 'paki-bashing' of the 1970s that was essentially anti-Asian, now began taking on a much more distinctly anti-Islamic expression, reflected also in the domestic response to the Gulf War, that called on Muslims repeatedly to articulate their relationship to the 'British position'.¹⁰³

1990; pp. 767-789, Gilles Kepel, "The Rushdie Affair", in Gilles Kepel, Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1997. Daniel Pipes interprets this conflict as the attempt by both countries to use the Rushdie affair to gain control of the international leadership of the Islamic world. (Daniel Pipes, The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West. Birch Lane Press, New York, 1990; see pp. 133-6.)

The reactions of non-Muslim minority groups to the Rushdie affair were more complex. At one level, one could say that the Rushdie affair united all Blacks in Britain in response to a renewed White racism. Hence, as Marxist Asian, Gautam Sen said in remarking on the response of British commentators on both the right and left to the Rushdie affair: "All sorts of racists are crawling out of the woodwork to clarify a more important prior division between white society and blacks, transcending any disagreements within white society itself...I was not born a Muslim, but I have to say that *we blacks are all Muslims now*." (From Talal Asad, "Ethnography, Literature, and Politics: *Some Readings and Uses of Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses*", in Talal Asad, Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993; pp. 280-1, my italics) However, several prominent members of the Asian community took stands against the "Muslim reaction" to the book, painting it as corrosive of the inadequate, but valuable, multicultural project of the British state. (See for instance, Mihir Bose, Daily Telegraph, London, 16th Feb. 1989, as reproduced in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990; pp. 97.) Modood critiques the London secular Asian intelligentsia (a minority of which is Muslim) for not just failing to act as an intermediary in the resolution of the conflict, but also joining in the public vilification of Muslims as "fundamentalists". Modood criticizes the "creation of an Anglicized middle/intellectual class which does not understand and/or feel responsible for its own ethnic working-class...". (Tariq Modood, "British Asian Muslims and the Rushdie Affair", The Political Quarterly, Vol. 61, No. 2, April-June 1990; pp. 143-160: pp. 155). However, there were other Asian intellectuals, like Bhikhu Parekh, who not only took a strong stand against the racist manner in which Muslim responses to the event were interpreted in the popular press, but also criticized Asian intellectuals who, unlike Afro-Caribbean intellectuals, were distant and removed from the concerns and problems of their communities. (See Bhikhu Parekh, Independent, London, 23rd Feb., 1989 as reproduced in Appignanesi and Maitland, 1990; pp. 123-4; and Bhikhu Parekh, "The Rushdie Affair and the British Press", in Dan Cohn-Sherbok (ed.), The Salman Rushdie Controversy in Interreligious Perspective. Edwin Mellon Press, New York, 1990; pp. 85-87.)

¹⁰³ See Husbands, 1994. Somewhat similar to the Rushdie affair, the white racism displayed during the Gulf war could also be said to have united minorities in a 'Muslim cause'. In response to the virulent racism against Pakis/Arabs/Muslims during and after the Gulf War, Sivanandan says: "This new racism makes no distinction between one Black and another, between refugee and settler, between Muslim and Hindu. Our fight, then, is not only against the new imperium, but against the new racism, an anti-Arab racism, the anti-Muslim racism. *We are all Muslims now!*" (A. Sivanandan, "A Black Perspective on the War", in Race and Class, 32, 4, 1991; pp. 88, my italics.) See John Newsinger, "Supporting 'Our Boys': the Sun and the Gulf War", in Race and Class, 32, 4, 1991: 92-98 for a discussion of the British media's (in particular the Sun's) jingoistic coverage of the Gulf War that portrayed British Muslims as 'traitors' to the nation.

To sum up, in bringing up the question of the place of non-European religious and cultural minorities in the context of a secular hegemony, the significance of the Rushdie affair lies in pointing to the limits of a taken-for-granted British secularism. Not only did this episode reveal the gaps in the existing secular legal structure, but much more tellingly, it brought into prominence the 'Christian face' of British secular hegemony within which Muslims and Islam remained 'cultural others'. In that sense, 'Islam within' put to test 'the limits of Western secularism'.

Conclusion

Much of the concern and fear of the global rise of religious nationalisms in the post-cold war period in the Western media and commentary converges on the 'threat of Islam'. It is clear that this contemporary discourse draws on representations and imagery that come out of the complex history of the interactions of the Anglo-European world with Islam and Muslims. However, the contemporaneity of this discourse gives it new expressions, a different salience, and produces different effects. The credibility of this 'threat' lies less in the materiality of the challenge that the so-called 'Islamic world' poses to the 'West' or to 'modernity', and more in the discursive (but very real) effects it has in 'creating enemies' who must then be confronted, marginalized or assimilated. Here power works through this discourse in creating the 'secular self' and its 'fundamentalist other'. As the chapter showed, the BJP in India certainly extracts such discursive value in its hegemonic project of 'othering Muslims'. Within Western countries, such as Britain, this discourse also proves valuable in magnifying the salience of the 'Islamic issue', making a 'threat' out of the demands of a vulnerable minority.

Herein lies the salience of the 'Global Threat of Islam'.

Chapter Four

Whither the Nation-State? The Articulation of National Identity

Introduction: Is there a Crisis of the Nation-State?

It is commonplace nowadays to hear of the threat to the nation-state in the contemporary world. Such threats are seen to emanate from many different quarters, at different levels of the international system. Donald Levine classifies these forces into three levels that exist in relation to nation-states (or the international level) – subnational, transnational and supranational.¹ Forces at the ‘subnational’ (or sometimes called ‘local’) levels occur from assertions of identity based on “blood, race, language, locality, religion, or tradition” or what Levine, following Geertz calls “primordial” ties that are not effectively accommodated by the modern nation-state, thought to be earlier associated with the postcolonial new states of Africa and Asia and now recognized as an element of nation-states all over the world. Without going into the problematic use of the category of “primordial”, given that all forms of social identity, and primordiality itself is always socially constructed, I would like to add to this list local claims to resources (assertions of land rights by indigenous groups, access to developmental resources by women’s groups, etc.), political participation (demands for democratization and decentralization), social measures (demands for provision of basic services, laws for protection from domestic violence, etc.) that often question the legitimacy and add pressure to the authority and power of the nation-

¹ Donald N. Levine, “Sociology and the Nation-State in an Era of Shifting Boundaries” in Sociological Inquiry, Vol. 66, No. 3, Summer 1996; 253-66. See especially pp. 261-63.

state. Forces at the 'transnational' level include of course first and foremost the giant corporations such as General Motors and IBM. Peter Drucker points out how multinational corporations (MNCs) which consisted of largely self-sufficient subsidiaries of parent companies being located overseas are now being increasingly replaced by transnational corporations (TNCs) in which production itself is organized globally. In this new structure of production the cessation of production in, or cut-off from, any particular subsidiary, say in the time of war, would impair the ability of any other subsidiary to function effectively, unlike earlier MNCs that could be nationalized and turned to produce for the host economy.² To the extent that modern nation-states depend on the activities of TNCs, this new structure of production has serious inter-national implications. Also included among the transnational forces are Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), such as the U.N. that constrain and enable existing nation-states in different ways depending on existing power distributions and normative understandings, and International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs) like Amnesty International and the International Red Cross that also influence, curtail, encourage state policies and practices. Finally, at the 'supranational' level exist assertions to identity that transcend national boundaries, such as in the idea of Europeanness that undergirds the EU attempt, or the category of the "free world", etc. One could include here as well the many globalizing forces represented in Benjamin Barber's characterization of 'McWorld', the creation of more encompassing normative frameworks based on for example, human rights, that

² Peter F. Drucker, "The Global Economy and the Nation-State" in Foreign Affairs, Volume 76, no. 5, Sept/Oct 1997; 159-71.

are often brought to bear in judging state practices, and most importantly, the global diffusion of market liberalization with all its attendant consequences. Some writers identify this last as a fourth 'global' level. In general, retaining the analytical primacy of national borders for now (which I will call into question later in the chapter), it is possible to reclassify these forces into two broad categories – forces that emanate from inside the nation-state or forces of 'fragmentation' and forces that come from outside the nation-state or forces of 'globalization'. In a book that deals with boundary-production, Andrew Linklater and John Macmillan begin with "normative questions which arise now that the sovereign state is threatened by the interlinked processes of globalization and political fragmentation," since as they point out, "the current challenge to the sovereign state occurs because of global processes and also because of the rise of identity politics within previously secure national boundaries."³

There are those then that bemoan or celebrate the demise of the nation-state as a viable and durable form of political community and collective identity. Jean Marie Guehenno, France's former ambassador to the EU predicted "the end of the nation" in a book by the same name, as globalization and transnational processes slowly grow to constrain state autonomy, leading to a new global order.⁴ Journalists Mathew Horsman and Andrew Marshall speculate on the future as the modern nation-state is ravaged by a globalizing liberal economy, and state power and authority seeps both upward into regional and global regimes and

³ Andrew Linklater and John Macmillan, "Introduction: Boundaries in Question" in John MacMillan and Andrew Linklater (ed.), Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations, Pinter Publishers, London, 1995; 1-16: pp. 3-7.

organizations and downwards into local government, nations and tribes.⁵ This impending sense, at least in the journalistic literature, that the nation-state is somehow in 'crisis' led the journal Political Studies to devote an entire issue to the question of the "Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State?", later reproduced as a book edited by John Dunn.⁶ Much of this sense of crisis comes from uncertainty about the future, associated somewhat also with the discrediting of global utopias contained within socialist and communist discourses as well as the end of cold war balance of power politics. While there are some who portend in these changes the emergence of 'global cultures' and 'global civil society', popular (and policy-making) imagination, at least in large parts of the Western world, have been captured by Samuel Huntington's vision of a future riven by "civilizational conflicts" (in place of conflicts between nation-states) and Robert Kaplan's dark prophecy of the anarchy and chaos that lies ahead.⁷

The field of international relations has of course been premised to a large extent on the ontological primacy of the nation-state. As Robert Keohane points out, the state-centric assumption forms the 'hard core' of political realism, both in its classical and neorealist expressions, so that world politics can be analyzed in terms of 'unitary' and 'rational' states as the most important actors.⁸ Even

⁴ Jean Marie Guehenno (translated by Victoria Elliot), The End of the Nation-State, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995.

⁵ Mathew Horsman and Andrew Marshall, After the Nation-State: Citizen, Tribalism and the New World Disorder, Harper Collins, London, 1995.

⁶ See Political Studies, volume 42, Special Issue 1994. John Dunn (ed.), The Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State?, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, 1995.

⁷ See Samuel S. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations" in Foreign Affairs, 72, 1993: 22-49; and Robert Kaplan, "The coming anarchy: how scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease are rapidly destroying the social fabric of our planet" in The Atlantic Monthly, vol 273, n 2, Feb 1994; pp 44-65.

⁸ See Robert Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in Robert Keohane (ed.), Neorealism and its Critics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996. Also see Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics, Addison-Wesley, Reading, 1979.

critiques of realism and neorealism that have challenged this state-centrism by pointing to the variety of non-state actors and the different levels of global interaction have often accepted the givenness and significance of nation-states. David Campbell has pointed out how this is true of much of international political economy, as in the literature on transnationalism, international regimes, hegemonic stability, as well as in the works of someone like Alexander Wendt who has self-consciously attempted to problematize nation-states.⁹ If the nation-state is really in crisis, this then has serious implications for the field of international relations.

This chapter is an exploratory discussion of how contemporary forces of globalization and fragmentation could threaten the nation-state, and how the nation-state might cope with such threats. The chapter argues that the nation-state continues to remain important as an actor, and the more interesting question is how national identity and state competency are reconfigured in the face of globalizing and fragmenting forces. But to understand if and why the nation-state is in crisis, one needs to understand the nature of the beast itself – what is the nation-state? I begin with a discussion of the concept of the nation-state, and then move on to discuss the implications of (1) fragmentation and (2) globalization for the future of the nation-state. The chapter ends with a brief section that looks at how the politics of Hindu nationalism draws upon, and counters the anxieties of globalization and fragmentation in a manner that is reproductive of the nation-state framework.

⁹ See David Campbell, “Political Prosaics, Transversal Politics, and the Anarchical World” in Michael Shapiro and Hayward Alker (ed.), Challenging Boundaries, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

What is the Nation-State?

The ideal articulation of 'nation' as a form of cultural community and the 'state' as a territorial, political unit is now widely accepted and often taken as unproblematic. Yet, scholars of nationalism point out that it was not always so. That every nation deserves its autonomy and identity through its own sovereign state (even though many may not demand it) is an ideal that many trace to the French Revolution. As Cobban points out, whereas before the French Revolution there had been no necessary connection between the state as a political unit and the nation as a cultural one, it became possible and desirable since then to think of a combination of these two in a single conception of the nation-state.¹⁰ That this still remains an 'ideal' and one vastly unrealized as in the existence of several 'multi-national' states is also largely recognized, although much of IR theory fails to follow through on the implications of that 'reality'.

Typologies of nation-states and nationalisms are quite common in the literature. E.K. Francis draws a distinction between 'ethnic' nations that are

1996; 7-31.

¹⁰ Alfred Cobban, The Nation State and National Self Determination, Harper Collins Publishers Limited, London, 1969. This occurs to an extent by the manner in which the French Revolution combined the Declaration of the Rights of Man with the demand for national sovereignty. (See Hannah Arendt, Origins of Totalitarianism, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1973.) See Istvan Hont for a more unorthodox historical interpretation which questions that nationalism is a post French Revolution development and problematizes this alleged historical rupture at the time of the French Revolution. Hont argues that the process of nationalism started with the formation of the new post-Renaissance composite states of Europe that included the rise of absolutism in its 'national' manifestations. Analyzing the different and contradictory discourses of the Revolution, Hont argues that the beginning of the Revolution can be seen as much as anything else as a revolution *against* the prevailing nationalist system of international relations, giving rise to the hope at the time that the nation-state was entering its crisis. Only with the onset of war (which initially was anti-nationalist and anti-imperialist) and the Terror did the Jacobin state become overly nationalist and led later to the more benign spread of nationalism across Europe. Hont points out that it was in fact the *failure* of anti-nationalist Jacobinism that fed nationalism and the internationalist vision of the Jacobins passed into the modern socialist tradition and Marxism. (Istvan Hont, "The Permanent Crisis

based on belief in common descent and a sense of solidarity and common identity, and 'demotic' nations that are based on shared administrative and military institutions, common territorial boundaries for protection and the mobility of goods and people.¹¹ This is similar to the distinction often made between 'cultural nations' based on ascriptive criteria such as language, customs, religion or some form of primordiality, and 'political nations' that are more contractual and derive from shared institutions, shared citizenship and a sense of shared history. Some point out that the latter form of nations is based more on 'civic' nationalism, as opposed to the 'ethnic' nationalism characteristic of the former type of nations. These distinctions are of course all ideal-types in that all existing nationalisms combine cultural and political elements, or civic and ethnic nationalisms in different ways.¹²

There has been some tension in the literature on nationalisms between the extent to which culture exists as a given resource for the constitution of nations and the extent to which culture has to be invented by nationalist elites. This is the debate between 'primordialist' and 'instrumentalist' theories of nationalism on the place and importance of culture in the constitution of nation-states. On the one hand, the primordialist approach, evident in the early work of Geertz, Shils and in the socio-biological theory of Van den Berghe, argues that ethnic and cultural

of a Divided Mankind: 'Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State' in Historical Perspective," in Political Studies, Volume 42, Special Issue, 1994; 166-231. See especially pp. 217-231.)

¹¹ E.K. Francis, Interethnic Relations: an Essay in Sociological Theory, Elsevier, New York, 1976.

¹² It might be useful here to also bring in the distinction sometimes made between the nationalist version associated with German Herderian romanticism grounded in particularist conceptions of the 'volk' and the version associated with French Enlightenment rationalism such as in Rousseau, grounded in a universalist, rationalist, contractual conception of the nation. See Silverman for a critique of this problematic opposition between the German and French conceptions of the nation and its implications for thinking about racism in

attachments are pre-givens or at least assumed givens and appear 'natural' to members of a group.¹³ As against this, the instrumentalist approach, evidenced to varying degrees in the works of Brass, Hobsbawm and Nairn, argues that ethnic attachments are often invented and manipulated by elites to construct the nation as a privileged source of a group's loyalty.¹⁴ In some ways, the tension here is one of emphasis. But ultimately I believe that such a tension detracts from the issue that *all national identities are constructed*. To the extent that what is important in constructing national identity is a *belief* in a common heritage and destiny, all nationalist ideologies have to work with the existing distribution of knowledge in a society at a particular time and place. The issue here is of the social meanings that come to be attached to different aspects of individual and group identity.

In other words, what ethnic or other distinctions become the significant cultural markers in any nationalism depends on the particular socio-historic conditions within which particular nationalist imaginings emerge. A linguistic nationalism would find both the separate existence of England and the U.S. and the common existence of French and English Canadians problematic. Most ethnic and religious nationalisms would also run into similar problems elsewhere. In

the French context. (Maxim Silverman, Deconstructing the Nation: Immigration, Racism and Citizenship in Modern France, Routledge, London, 1992.)

¹³ Clifford Geertz, Old Societies and New States, The Free Press, New York, 1963; Edward Shils, "Primordial, Personal, Sacred and Civil Ties", in British Journal of Sociology, No. 7, 1957; Pierre Van den Berghe, "Race and Ethnicity: A Sociological Perspective", in Ethnic and Racial Studies, vol. 1, no. 4, Routledge, 1978. Anthony Smith's approach, that investigates the ethnic origins of nations, is somewhat more sophisticated than most primordialist approaches in that it recognizes that the meanings of the "myth-symbol complex" that grounds a relatively durable ethnic can change over time; Anthony Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.

¹⁴ Paul Brass, "Elite Groups, Symbol Manipulation and Ethnic Identity Among the Muslims of South Asia", in D. Taylor and M. Yapp. (ed.), Political Identity in South Asia, Curzon Press, London, 1979; Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions" and "Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe 1870-1914" in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (ed.), The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge University Press, New York,

other words, there are no 'natural' nationalities. There is no apriori manner in which peoples can be made into nations. It is the work of nationalism to construct or produce a 'nation'. In the words of Benedict Anderson, the nation has to be "imagined". Nations are imagined "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."¹⁵ It is through nationalist ideology that this communion is constructed. Anderson traces the development of nationalism to the development of print-capitalism, which helped to produce and disseminate a common culture to ground the national imagination.¹⁶ Regardless of what basis is used to ground this communion, nations are ultimately based on what Etienne Balibar has called 'fictive ethnicities'. It is the work of nationalist ideology to 'ethnicize' a community.¹⁷ It is through the representational labor of nationalist ideology that a community is constructed *as if* it formed a natural communion with its unique and singular origin and destiny.¹⁸

Nationalist movements over the world have, and continue to, produce these communities, that sometimes demand their own states leading to

1983; Tom Nairn, The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism, 2nd Edition, New Left Books, London, 1977.

¹⁵ Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Verso, London, 1983: pp. 15.

¹⁶ Kate Manzo thinks it important to distinguish the invention or creation of nationalism (which has a longer and pre-modern historical lineage) from the ability of modern capitalism's capacity to disseminate it. (Kathryn A. Manzo, Creating Boundaries: The Politics of Race and Nation, Lynne Rienner Publishers, London, 1996. See especially pp. 8-13.)

¹⁷ Etienne Balibar, "Racism and Nationalism" and "The Nation Form: History and Ideology", in E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein, Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities, Verso, London, 1991.

¹⁸ The place of symbolism and ceremony in concretizing and popularizing the imagined community in what Eric Hobsbawm has called the "invention of tradition" plays an important role here. Hobsbawm focuses on three major innovations that have accompanied the invention of national tradition - primary education, invention of public ceremonies and mass production of public monuments; Hobsbawm, ibid.

irrendendist movements, and at other times seek various concessions and accommodations within the political parameters of existing states. But ‘nation-building’ has always been a project of the state as well and the widespread existence of global norms on sovereignty and self-determination (and the continuing appeal of the ideal of the ‘nation-state’) now ensure that existing states themselves have to engage to some extent in attempts at nation-building. In other words, *it is not simply that nations often seek and demand states, but states need nations as well.*¹⁹ Claims to ‘nationhood’ gives the state authority over its people as well as international standing within a larger system of states. It is the way for states to seek and ensure legitimacy within a system of states in which the ideal of the nation-state is a universal organizing principle for collective identity. This is

¹⁹ Without going into the enormous literature on states, let me briefly elaborate on my theory of the state here. States, very simply, are governance authorities with political sovereignty over a defined territory. While the authority of the state might be maintained through its monopoly on the legitimate use of force, its legitimacy also depends on its ability to claim rightful obedience from its citizens. In modern states the latter is often secured not so much through coercive force but through ‘consent’ and nation-building aids in that process of securing consent. (Of course, nation-building is but one form through which this consent is secured. State legitimacy may be established through invoking the ‘legality’ of state powers and actions or through establishing ‘democratic’ forms of governance that involves different levels of popular political participation, etc.) This draws on Gramsci’s notion of the state as a constellation of social forces that operates through ‘coercion plus hegemony’, where direct political power is exercised through control over the coercive forces of the state apparatus that includes the police and military, and ‘ideological hegemony’ is established through the influence of ideas and institutions within civil society (through the ideological state apparatuses or the ISAs, like schools, churches, families, as in Althusser’s work) and it is in the latter arena that consent is secured. In other words, the modern state is not a unitary, singular structure but a complex entity composed of a variety of institutional apparatuses, not simply reducible to governmental organizations. State power is established through a network of institutions that spans the political, economic and social arenas. The development of the modern welfare state, in which the legitimacy of the state derives to a large extent from its ability to provide for the economic and social needs of its citizens, and be a vehicle for social and economic justice and equality, is important for my argument in the latter part of my paper. (See Gregor McLennan, David Held and Stuart Hall (ed.), The Idea of the Modern State, Open University Press, Milton Keynes, England, 1984 and Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Ruesschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (ed.), Bringing the State Back in, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985 for very useful discussions of the state.) At the international level, the principle of ‘sovereignty’, defined both internally and externally, establishes the state’s authority over a defined territory. John Ruggie has described how the modern conception of sovereignty is based on a form of territorial rule that is “possessive” and “exclusivist” in its organization of political space. (John Ruggie, “Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis,” in Robert Keohane (ed.) Neorealism and its Critics, Columbia University Press, New York, 1986; 131-157)

perhaps part of the reason that state discourse hardly ever refers to ‘nations’ within its borders, even though particular groups might themselves or by others be designated as such. States instead prefer to use the more safe label of ‘ethnicities’ (or ‘tribes’ or ‘races’) for such groups.²⁰ State legitimacy requires the state to speak in the name of a singular nation, and this generates efforts toward nation-building. These efforts are more evident and stark at times of crisis such as war, but in reality always in existence in more subtle ways through various state policies and programs, as well as through the ideological state apparatuses in civil society. At the same time, the efficacy of the state also affects to an extent the legitimacy of the nation in the eyes of the various social groups within the state. The extent to which the state is able to meet the needs, expectations and demands of different groups ensures at least partially the extent to which these groups feel a

²⁰ Oomen makes the distinction between ethnic groups, nations and nation-states on the basis of claims to territory. He defines an *ethnie* as a collectivity without homeland, composed essentially of migrants among whom there is a dissociation between culture and territory. If an *ethnie* aspires to and successfully establishes a *moral claim* over the territory to which it migrated and hence identifies as its homeland, it becomes a nation, and if it then aspires to and successfully establishes a *legal claim* over that territory, it becomes a nation-state. See T.K. Oomen, “State, nation and *ethnie*: the processual linkages” in Peter Ratcliffe (ed.), *“Race”, Ethnicity and Nation: International Perspectives on Social Conflict*, UCL Press Ltd., London, 1994; 26-46. The idea of ‘territoriality’ is of course essential to the conception of the modern nation-state, which as John Ruggie has shown remains undertheorized in most extant IR theory despite its geospatial emphasis. (Ruggie, 1986) Rudolfo Stavenhagen points to the different salience of ‘territory’ in civic nationalisms in which territory determines the legal unit of the sovereign state to which citizenship belongs and ethnic nationhood in which territory serves a necessary referent, but not so much as the space to which citizenship rights and legal systems apply, but as the historic homeland. (Rudolfo Stavenhagen, *Ethnic Conflicts and the Nation-State*, MacMillan Press Ltd., London, 1996. See especially chapter 1.) The concept of ‘diaspora’ both creates and disrupts this association of the nation with territory in quite interesting ways. Some authors have talked about “deterritorialized nation-state building” as a new and significant form of postcolonial nationalism, which attempts to incorporate transmigrants into the body politic of their states of origin, and in doing so reflect and reinforce the division of the entire globe into nation-states. (See Linda Basch, Glick Schiller, Cristina Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized States*, Gordon and Breech, Longhorne, 1994.) Arjun Appadurai also speaks to this deterritorialization of contemporary cultural identity in pointing to how the disjunctive processes of late capitalism, the media, cultural politics, etc. have ‘globalized’ ethnicity, which even though always constructed, was at one time, more localized. It is an interesting feature of the contemporary world that such globally dispersed identities have the ability to ignite the kind of intimacy and political passion that were once the province of geographically tighter groups. (See Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” in *Public Culture*, 2(2), Spring 1990: 1-24)

sense of civic (if not cultural) loyalty to the nation that the state claims to represent.

In that sense state-building and nation-building have become simultaneous and symbiotic processes. Yet, for analytical purposes it is perhaps better not to conflate these two processes because even if the ends they seek are somewhat similar or complementary, the processes remain somewhat different. State-building occurs through the penetration and integration of the territorial economy, polity and society and speaks to questions of political authority and effective governance. Nation-building is the construction of a cohesive cultural community that can demand citizen loyalty and commitment.²¹ As I will show in the next section, the fragmentation of nation-states refers to the second process, and in particular to the inability of the state to build cohesive nations, while those that point to the effects of globalization on weakening the nation-state often (but not exclusively) refer to problems with state-building. Each of these, as I will argue below, have different implications for the future of the nation-state.

Fragmentation of the Nation-State

The legitimacy of the nation-state depends to a large extent on its coherence, unity and stability in the eyes of its citizenry, or in other words of the ability of the state to project a unified nation. The imagined nations, as Anderson points out, present themselves as 'communities' "because regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always

²¹ See Istvan Hont, "The Permanent Crisis of a Divided Mankind: 'Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State' in Historical Perspective," in *Political Studies*, Volume 42, Special Issue, 1994; 166-231.

conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.”²² Or at least the depth and equality of that comradeship determines to an extent the legitimacy that the state enjoys with different social groups. Part of the project of the state is to seek consent from its citizens as to the depth and equality of that comradeship. Yet, the national space is riven by many differences and conflicts – among ethnicities, races, religious groups, classes, genders, etc. Each of those differences threatens the coherence and unity of the national fabric. Most of the literature on fragmentation focuses on ethnic (and religious) conflicts within existing states (these conflicts of course usually also have a class and gender basis to it). Nation-building requires that such ethnic and religious conflicts are effectively contained by the state. Even though ‘assimilation’ has been an avowed goal of many states historically, Talal Asad has pointed out that hegemonic power works not so much through suppressing differences by homogenization, as through differentiating and marginalizing.²³ The ‘nation’ in projects of the state does not represent a singular cultural space so much as a hierarchy of cultural spaces. What Rudolfo Stavenhagen calls an ‘ethnocratic state’ – a nation-state controlled essentially by a majority or dominant ethnic, able to exercise cultural hegemony over the rest of the nation – is the rule rather than the exception in the modern system of nation-states.²⁴ The success of nation-building depends on the extent to which the state

²² Benedict Anderson, *ibid*: pp. 16.

²³ Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993.

²⁴ Rudolfo Stavenhagen, *ibid*: pp. 9. Or as pointed out by Kaviraj, “...this political imagination of the nation is rarely an incontestably simple and single idea; most actual nationalism contains within its apparent singularity conflicting interpretations of what it means to be that nation contesting for space and political expression. Behind the state several configurations of nationalism lie indistinctly and jostle for political realization; the dominance of one of those, which then turns into the ideology of the eventual nation-state, is, though decisive, historically contingent.” (Sudipta Kaviraj, “Crisis of the Nation-State in India”, *Political Studies*, XLII, 1994: pp. 114)

is able to secure a broad measure of ‘consent’ on this hierarchy. The national project requires the construction of what Asad calls a ‘cultural core’ that becomes the ‘essence’ of ‘the nation’. At the most basic level, fragmentation occurs when the state is no longer (if ever) able to effectively secure consent on this cultural core.²⁵

States have a variety of available means to meet the demands of ethnic and religious groups within its borders. To the extent that assimilation is no longer considered possible or effective, or even desirable, states can and do make attempts to accommodate such demands through various political and institutional mechanisms. Regardless of how vociferous and well organized those demands are, which might make a polity quite unstable in certain situations, fragmentation refers more specifically to situations where such demands are linked with claims to territory. Or using Oomen’s definition from footnote 20, it is when an ethnic group establishes a moral claim to territory within a state that one can speak of subnationalisms, or sometimes called ethnonationalisms. Many states that are classified as nation-states within IR have always been such multi-national states – like in India where different ethnic and linguistic groups are regionally organized on the basis of claims to territory, or as in the case of the Scots and the Welsh within Britain. Such moral claims to territory might not necessarily generate separatist or irredentist movements. Nations within existing states might subordinate (if never completely) local claims to identity to constructions of more

²⁵ Of course the process of nation-building (and state-building) is an ongoing, continuous process and nation-states are never finished, complete entities. Boundaries, both within and outside the nation-state, have to be constantly produced and reproduced. In one sense, internal differences within a state are never completely subdued, even if state rhetoric continues to assert the identity of ‘the people’ as the basis of its

encompassing nationhood (as often happens more effectively in times of crisis), or such overlapping forms of national and sub-national forms of identity might co-exist comfortably (even if sometimes contradictorily). But it is the existence of such sub-nationalisms that creates the possibility of the fragmentation of the nation-state. Ultimately, this can be a crisis of the nation-state because such nationalisms threaten to fragment one of the central basis of state sovereignty - *the territorial integrity of the existing nation-state*.

I will not go here into the structural conditions of possibility for fragmentation to become a real issue within any existing nation-state. There are some writers who link the recent resurgence of ethnic and religious nationalisms to the end of the cold war and the lifting of the security lid placed on ethnic conflicts through superpower rivalry. Some authors have commented on how the impersonal market forces of globalization or the increasing global dominance of American cultural icons lead to assertions of identity.²⁶ Perhaps one can still find capitalism's uneven development as "nation-producing", as did Tom Nairn for the early period of nation-building after the French and the Industrial Revolutions, so that the ethnicization of class and regional differences leads to politicized nationalist imaginings.²⁷ Or maybe the civic (more than the cultural) nationalism of many modern states makes the nation-state, unlike ethnicity or religion, simply too large, amorphous and psychically distant to be the object of *intimate*

legitimacy. The question here is, when do such differences become so pronounced that state authority and legitimacy are seriously impaired?

²⁶ I will speak more to these issues later in the chapter.

²⁷ Tom Nairn, *ibid*.

affection.²⁸ The point here is that fragmentation occurs and is occurring rapidly in the world as evidenced in Bosnia, Rwanda, Spain, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, Canada, to name very few geographically diverse examples. Fragmentation occurs when there is a disarticulation between the state as a spatial unit (with fixed territory) and the spatial claims of the nation(s) in whose name(s) it speaks. The question here is: what implication does such fragmentation have for the future of the nation-state?

The ultimate concern with fragmentation, as I mentioned before, is that it threatens the territorial integrity of existing nation-states. But as Istvan Hont points out, even though there might be legitimate grounds for concern over the territorial integrity of contemporary states devolving into smaller territorial units, this should be seen as a 'triumph' rather than a 'crisis' of the nation-state.²⁹ Fragmentation is a threat to the existence of *particular* states, rather than the system of nation-states. It represents the failure of particular states to hold on to the 'spatiality' (both geopolitically and culturally) of their claims to legitimacy. But in more general terms, fragmentation represents the success of the *ideal* of the nation-state – that every nation deserves its own state. This seems more obvious in the case of the end of empire and its dissolution into independent polities each claiming the title of nation-state, post world war I and II eras of decolonization, and more recently in the break-up of the Soviet Union and Eastern bloc countries. The anxieties that fragmentation generates is with respect to what are seen as

²⁸ Robin Cohen develops this point to explain how diasporas form and are sustained despite their dispersal among a variety of nation-states that tries to assimilate them in different ways. Robin Cohen, "Diasporas and the nation-state: from victims to challengers" in *International Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3, July 1996; 507-20.

²⁹ See Istvan Hont, *ibid*: pp. 176-77.

more established and thereby legitimate nation-states, most notably perhaps in the case of Western states like Britain, France and Spain, as well as in the case of some of the more stable postcolonial societies like India and Kenya. But as previously argued most such states are also based on a variety of internal exclusions, and the 'cultural core' in nation-building efforts often represents or is perceived as a form of cultural hegemony of the dominant ethnic/racial group. If subordinate groups that find their identities submerged, marginalized or erased through such nation-building efforts of the state are able to politicize group consciousness through laying moral claims to territory, this should be seen as legitimate ethical claims to nation-state status.

As mentioned previously, groups within existing states might not make such claims to territory, instead preferring accommodation through the available institutional mechanisms of the existing state, or they make claims to territory and not seek separation from the state, but more decentralization of powers and territorial autonomy within the existing polity. These efforts also bolster my argument that efforts by groups (defined ethnically, racially or nationally) that see themselves as disadvantaged within a polity to seek more political power strengthens (rather than weakens) *the principle* on which the ideal of the nation-state is based – that culturally cohesive communities (such as the nation) can lay legitimate moral claim to political autonomy.³⁰ In the extreme case this leads to

³⁰ Using a communitarian perspective, Anthony Black believes that "it is as reasonable and as realistic to regard a *variety* of communities as the building-blocks of international society as it is to regard the particular kind of community we call nation in this way." (Anthony Black, "Nation and Community in the International Order" in Review of International Studies, 19, 1993, 81-89.) Even though the salience of nations does derive from the strength of national allegiances (that people are socialized into from their birth), Black points out that nationhood is one claim among others, the essential bond of shared ways of life and ideology is not peculiar only to nations, and the national bond is not necessarily stronger nor does the

the emergence of new nation-states. One can of course ask, what is the end to the possible cycle of nation production and the dissolution of existing nation-states? Istvan Hont points out that the “modern idea of nationalism holds that the bottom line of such devolution is reached when the political community of a state is ethnically homogenized.”³¹ But if nations (ethnicities) are always to some extent cultural constructions, this process of devolution can be an endless process. But ultimately this is a practical question (of political viability) rather than a question of theory.³² Theoretically, fragmentation of the nation-state ‘celebrates’ the nation-state ideal and is its logical outcome, and in doing so reproduces the nation-system system (even if not in its contemporary composition).

Globalization and the Nation-State

The effects of globalization on the nation-state are somewhat more complex. Forces outside the nation-state can constrain, enable, influence the nation-state in a variety of ways. For the purposes of this discussion, I categorize these forces into two groups – forces of economic globalization and forces of cultural globalization, although the two are quite closely related in many ways.

nation have any special moral claim. Black also points out that the link between the nation and the state also has no particular moral legitimacy, and if the legitimacy of statehood depends on the authority of the law and protection from violence, then other groups also qualify for that status. Hence, nations, like other forms of community should be subject to the higher moral demands of law and rights, applicable even to outsiders, just as labor unions and business firms.

³¹ Hont, *ibid*: pp. 173.

³² I am not suggesting that the claims of all ‘nations’ are by themselves legitimate or just, simply because they claim some kind of cultural unity or authenticity. In other words, like Anderson, I do not believe that nationalism in itself is a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ thing. The legitimacy of any nationalist claim needs to be interrogated with respect to issues of ‘democracy’ – who speaks for the community, who is marginalized in this construction, how does the community see itself vis-à-vis other like communities, etc. , are all important questions that cannot be settled a priori without careful, contextual explorations.

Economic Globalization

Let me begin by looking at how the internationalization of economic activity affects the coherence and viability of the nation-state. The development of the field of International Political Economy (IPE) has done much to point out that exclusive focus on the nation-state as a unit of analysis can be inadequate in understanding the dimensions of economic activity in the modern world. Some approaches within IPE, such as interdependence, regime and hegemonic stability theories continue to be state-centric. But that is not the case with a number of other approaches. Marxist approaches in particular have been divided over the question of the role of the state.³³ This division has been over the question of the extent to which the supranational character of the capitalist mode of production constrains all modern state structures versus the extent to which the state plays a direct role in promoting the internationalization of capital.³⁴ Exemplifying the former perspective, Wallerstein's World Systems Theory was based on the ontological primacy of the world capitalist system, based on a single division of labor between the core, peripheral and semi-peripheral regions of the world. Even though Wallerstein recognized the significance of nation-states in the modern world, in his analysis the imperatives of market exchange at the international level curtailed state autonomy so much so that nation-states were but superstructural

³³ Much of Marxist analysis has been critiqued for its inadequate theorization of the state. This is a critique easily applied to the 'capital logics school', as represented for example in the work of Ernest Mandel. (See Ernest Mandel, Late Capitalism (trans. Joris De Bres), NLB: London, 1972.) The 'Miliband-Poulantzas debate' on the degree of state autonomy in capitalist society dealt more directly with the question of the role of the state, but assumed that the state always acted to promote the legitimacy of capitalist society. (See Nicos Poulantzas, "The Problem of the Capitalist State", in New Left Review, 58(1960); 67-78 and Ralph Miliband, "The Capitalist State: Reply to Nicos Poulantzas, in New Left Review, 59(1970); 53-60.)

appendages aiding in the reproduction of the modern global capitalist system.³⁵

But other scholars who have looked at the internationalization of capital have stressed how the state continues to play a role in the reproduction of capitalism. Robin Murray points out that as capital extends beyond its national borders, the historical link that bound it to its particular domestic state no longer *necessarily* holds. But the domestic state is not territorially limited in its activities, and it might well “follow” its capital and perform the critical “economic roles” that it has always played in the reproduction of capitalism.³⁶

This debate on the “internationalization of the state” has been renewed in the literature on economic globalization. Writers are increasingly pointing out how the gradual shift from multinational corporations toward more transnational corporations or from the internationalization of economic activity (as economic activity spreads across state borders) toward the globalization of economic activity (that involves a more functional integration of economic activity spread globally) also limits state capacity to control and influence domestic national economies and thus weakens state authority over its national space.³⁷ This is what

³⁴ See Andrew Linklater, Beyond Realism and Marxism: Critical Theory and International Relations, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1990. (See especially chapters 6 and 7, “The States-System and the World System.” and “Class and State in International Relations”)

³⁵ Hence his reservations about socialist states, that in participating in international trade and commerce, remained a part of, and abettor in, the continuation of the world capitalist system. Wallerstein seriously doubted the ability of states to act as antisystemic forces. See Immanuel Wallerstein, The Capitalist World Economy, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979 and Immanuel Wallerstein, The Politics of the World Economy: The States, the Movements and the Civilizations, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1984.

³⁶ Robin Murray, “the Internationalization of Capital and the Nation-State”, in New Left Review, 67, May-June, 1971: 84-109.

³⁷ See Drucker, *ibid*; and Peter Dicken, Global Shift: The Internationalization of Economic Activity, 2nd Edition, Guilford Press, New York, 1992. This is the distinction sometimes made between the international economy (movements of trade, investments, payments that are regulated by the state) and the world/global economy (cross-boundary unregulated movements of production and finance). It is significant of course, that globalization of free markets in this form “frees” capital, but not labour, from state regulation.

Mittelman has called “the spatial reorganization of production, the interpenetration of industries across borders (and) the spread of financial markets.”³⁸ The spatial reorganization of production has been accompanied by changes in the international division of labour, which has included among other changes the feminization of certain kinds of labour. The globalization of international finance has led to the enormous flow of capital and currencies with increasing rapidity, huge growth of global currency speculation and currency instability, and has increasingly curtailed the ability of the state to control monetary and fiscal policy.³⁹ In general, it has been argued that in the face of economic globalization, state autonomy is considerably reduced, as the state becomes simply a facilitator of globalization.⁴⁰

In particular, it is the weakening of the welfare state occurring in the wake of the globalization of economic liberalization that is seen to limit state competence and authority all over the world. If the origins of the state had been

³⁸ James H. Mittelman, “The Dynamics of Globalization”, in James H. Mittelman (ed.), Globalization: Critical Reflections, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1996: pp. 2.

³⁹ For arguments on how the globalization of finance and production threatens the future of the nation-state, see R.O’Brien, Global Financial Integration: the End of Geography, Sage Publications, London, 1990; Dick Bryan, The Chase Across the Globe: International Accumulation and the Contradictions for Nation States, Westview Press, Boulder, 1995; V. Schmidt, “The New World Order, Incorporated: The Rise of Business and the Decline of the Nation-State,” Daedalus, vol. 124, no. 2 Spring 1995; 75-106.

⁴⁰ See Mittelman, *ibid*; and Robert Cox, “A Perspective on Globalization”, in James H. Mittelman (ed.), Globalization: Critical Reflections, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1996. For Cox, who explicitly ties globalization to world capitalism, globalization entails the post-Fordist restructuring of production that followed the crisis of the mid-1970s based on a decentralized system of flexible production that is accompanied by deregulation, privatization, social policy cut-backs, emphasis on international competitiveness, etc., and that undid the post world war II constellation of forces. Cox also highlights the importance of “globalization as ideology” - the “there is no alternative” or TINA factor that represents globalization as inevitable and necessary, so that the role of states is reduced to ensuring the working out of this market logic. In Cox’s analysis, the “internationalization of the state” means that states become “transmission belts” from the global to the national economies, adjusting the domestic economy to the exigencies of the global economy. (See also and Robert Cox, Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987 for a discussion of how specific historical forms of state structures have been shaped by, and have in turn shaped, changing production relations).

in the provision of security⁴¹, the growth of the 'welfare state' in post world war II industrial societies has now been well documented. But the decreasing appeal of Keynesian macroeconomic management in post-industrial societies (and the shift to supply-side economics) and the accompanied cut-back in public provision of social services threatens the legitimacy of the state as it increasingly finds itself with little control over the economy (as jobs, investment migrate) and unable to meet the expectations of the people for securing their prosperity. In post-colonial societies, the disintegration of the 'developmentalist state' with the increasing adoption of IMF and World Bank sponsored market liberalization, is also a potential threat to state legitimacy as the state is unable to deliver on promises of basic needs provisions, as the vehicle for social justice and equality and as the symbol of national resistance to external (imperialist) pressures.

In many ways, this sense of the declining 'political efficacy' of the contemporary state is not entirely unfounded. Even if states cannot, and perhaps never could, control totally or effectively economic activity within its borders⁴², its ability to regulate such activity to an extent and its willingness to undertake redistributive measures that tempered some of the more socially malignant effects of the market brought it a certain amount of legitimacy and approval from large sections of the population. This articulation of the nation-state, not simply as a provider of order and security, but as a provider of social (and economic) needs (as in education, health care, nutrition, housing as well as in ensuring a certain

⁴¹ See Charles Tilly, "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime" in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (ed.), Bringing the State Back in, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1985.

⁴² John Dunn (ed.), The Economic Limits to Politics, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.

level of employment, minimum wages, price stability, etc.) has been an important and significant development of the second half of the twentieth century. Even if there is increasing consensus in policy-making circles around the world of the efficiency of market forces and the need for market liberalization and cut-backs in state activity in the economic realm, the expectations of the population from the state tend to be more complex. Even where many sections of the population might be dissatisfied with the functioning of existing states, the initial impact of market reforms on large sections of the population can be quite adverse and severe. This is evidenced for instance in the cut-back of social welfare programs in advanced industrial societies on minority groups and women, as also in the adoption of IMF imposed structural adjustments programs on poor people and especially women in the lower economic classes in the third world. The internationalization and globalization of economic activity, combined with the global spread of economic liberalization can in that sense certainly weaken the ability of the state to meet up to the expectations of sections of populations, and possibly create new kinds of “legitimacy crises”.⁴³

This is not simply a practical problem for particular states, which of course it is. John Dunn points out that while the immediate appeal of the nation derives much more from the subjective force of being born in a particular set of social relations, the appeal of the state lies in its *efficacy or competence*, which is

⁴³ Another area which challenges state capacity (and hence legitimacy) is in the area of environmental degradation. Increasing awareness of the urgency and severity of environmental problems and the realization that environmental problems (like economics) do not respect national boundaries have forced states to institute cooperative arrangements to regulate state practices. The competence and legitimacy of states depends somewhat on the extent to which it can meet the ecological dangers to its population (dangers whose source might be outside state boundaries).

much more objective.⁴⁴ To the extent that the idea of the modern nation-state is so closely linked to the idea of the welfare state or the developmentalist state, the efficacy of the contemporary state depends on the ability of the state to deliver on 'welfare' or 'development'. To that extent, the decreased competency of the state to deliver on those promises could create the kinds of legitimacy crises that might call into question the durability of the nation-state. Perhaps over time, expectations of what the state can or should do will change. Nation-state legitimacy will depend on the extent on which 'consent' coheres around new constructions of 'national/state identity' more in tune with the new roles of the state.

To some extent, states that have recognized the impossibility of enjoying political autonomy over economic issues have increasingly turned to non-state entities for performing these functions more effectively. For instance, Alan Milward has argued that post-war European integration, in particular the launch of monetary union, was an attempt by many European nation-states to increase the capacity of the state to meet the expectations of its citizens, and in doing so to "rescue the nation-state" from its demise.⁴⁵ Transfer of political authority over monetary decision-making to a supranational entity, hence losing fiscal and monetary sovereignty, was perhaps the only way for states to ensure a certain amount of economic stability in many of the states racked by huge currency fluctuations. In this somewhat unorthodox analysis, the creation of supranational entities like the EU could paradoxically make the nation-state stronger rather than

⁴⁴ John Dunn, "Introduction: Crisis of the Nation State?" in Political Studies, vol. 42, special issue, 1994; 3-15.

weaker. Whether this will indeed be the result of the European union, of course remains to be seen. Helen Thompson points out that even though in themselves, monetary integration and the nation-state are not incompatible, the way the single currency projects have developed in practice since 1989 once again casts questions over the future of the nation-state in Europe. Fiscal austerity imposed by strong economic powers like Germany has made it difficult for many other European states to meet the economic expectations shaped by the fiscal promises of the post-war prosperity years, thus threatening the political legitimacy of those states.⁴⁶

But even scholars who point to the limitations on state autonomy in the context of the diffusion of TINA expectations, don't discount the role that the state continues to play in aiding globalization. For Cox, even if state power of "shielding domestic economies from negative effects of globalization has diminished", states and intergovernmental organizations continue to play the role of "enforcing the rules of the global economy and in enhancing national competitiveness".⁴⁷ Mittelman points to the contradictory pressures on late-industrializers to both integrate into the international economy and intervene in the domestic economy to create a competitive edge. The question he says is "not whether the state should intervene in the economy but what type of state and what interventions are most appropriate in a specific context? And policy initiatives in

⁴⁵ Alan Milward, The European Rescue of the Nation-State, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1992.

⁴⁶ Helen Thompson, "The Nation-State and International Capital in Historical Perspective," in Government and Opposition, vol. 32, no. 1, winter 1997; 84-113. See especially pp. 108-113. How the European monetary union will affect the political legitimacy of the weaker economic actors within the union remains to be seen.

⁴⁷ Robert Cox, "A Perspective on Globalization", in James H. Mittelman, Globalization: Critical Reflections, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1996: pp. 26-27.

whose interest?”⁴⁸ Leo Panitch takes a noticeably stronger stand on the issue by emphasizing the extent to which contemporary globalization is “authored” by states, so that “(f)ar from witnessing a bypassing of the state by a global capitalism, we see very active states and highly politicized sets of capitalist classes working to secure...the global and domestic rights of capital.”⁴⁹ Panitch argues that even in the face of ideological consensus on globalization, states participate in “constitutionalizing neoliberalism” through interstate treaties (like NAFTA) that are “designed to legally enforce upon future governments general adherence to the discipline of the capital market.”⁵⁰ Panitch is adamant that the globalizing pressures even on advanced industrial states has led to a reorganization of the structural power relations within states and has changed the nature of state intervention, but *has not* diminished the role of the state.

But even if the role of the state can be reduced to being the ‘agent’ of globalization, the state remains important for a number of other reasons. Despite the rise of various forms of terrorism, including ‘state terrorism’, the state retains significant monopoly on the use of legitimate violence. The state continues to have monopoly on taxation, is still seen as the ultimate arbiter of social conflict, is expected to provide ‘security’ from external threats, and to perform a variety of other functions. Perhaps most importantly, in the face of globalization, the state continues to be seen as the site for many to seek protection from some of the effects of global corporate capitalism. As Panitch points out, “(n)ot only is the

⁴⁸ Mittelman, *ibid*: pp. 16-17

⁴⁹ Leo Panitch, “Rethinking the Role of the State”, in James H. Mittelman, Globalization: Critical Reflections, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1996: pp. 85.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*: pp. 96.

world still very much composed of states, but insofar as there is any effective democracy at all in relation to the power of capitalists and bureaucrats it is still embedded in political structures that are national or subnational in scope.”⁵¹ The exercise of democratic control over capital takes on an even greater urgency for Southern countries increasingly subject to IMF pressures, where the state is sometimes the only refuge against neoimperialism.⁵²

The point is that even though state legitimacy is potentially threatened by economic globalization, much depends on how state roles are reconfigured in the face of globalization. Even if the economic limits to national politics is not a new problem for state legitimacy, the qualitative shift in economic globalization in later twentieth century capitalism, as well as the development of the nature of the contemporary state, does change somewhat the implications for state legitimacy. In itself, the dispersal of some of the functions of state to other non-state entities, whether supranational or subnational (micro-management rather than macro-management by the state) does not threaten state legitimacy, but can in fact strengthen it. Economic globalization certainly entails different state roles, changing expectations from the people, and new measures of state competency, but does not necessarily threaten the existence of the nation-state.

⁵¹ Panitch, *ibid*: pp. 109.

⁵² To what extent the state can be a site of resistance against globalization is a research question that can only be answered by exploring the particular structures, social forces and relations that compose the state in any particular socio-historic situation.

Cultural Globalization

There is also a cultural dimension to globalization which has implications for the nation-state and its future as well. This has more to do with issues of identity. Roland Robertson defines globalization as both “the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole.”⁵³ While the process of this compression might have been occurring over a very long time, the recent growth of communications technology (cheap and fast air travel, telephonic and telegraphic services, satellite media transmission, and of course the internet and cyberspace) has both accelerated and deepened this process. This is a process, that many argue, both brings the world together and splits the world apart simultaneously. As Stuart Hall points out, globalization at the cultural level leads to *both* the universalization *and* the fragmentation and multiplication of identities.⁵⁴ Robertson talks of how globalization leads to the simultaneity of “the particularization of universalism (the rendering of the world as a single place) and the universalization of particularism (the globalized expectation that societies...should have distinct identities).”⁵⁵ In his more recent work, Robertson has offered the concept of “glocalization” to emphasize the *simultaneity* of the homogenizing *and* heterogenizing thrusts of globalization in the late twentieth

⁵³ Roland Robertson, Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture, Sage Publications, London, 1992; pp. 8. Roland Robertson has spoken quite extensively and authoritatively on the issue of religion and globalization. I draw from his work fairly liberally in this chapter, as I did in chapter two.

⁵⁴ Stuart Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), Identity: Community, Culture, Difference, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1990

⁵⁵ Roland Robertson as quoted in Peter Beyer, Religion and Globalization, Sage Publications, London, 1994; pp. 28. See also chapter 6 (“The Universalism-Particularism Issue”) in Robertson, 1992.

century world.⁵⁶ Keeping in mind that these two processes are simultaneous, let us look at their different implications for nation-states.

Let me begin with the homogenization thrusts of globalization. In one sense, the universalization of the appeal of the nation-state as an ideal cultural-political form of collective identity is itself a product of globalization. The now globalized expectation that nations exist and deserve their states is fairly well accepted and forms the normative foundation for most contemporary international organizations. In addition, these international organizations have served to institutionalize the *form* of the nation-state, and impose a certain amount of uniformity in the nation-state system. John Meyer has pointed out how globalization in this sense serves to strengthen the nation-state. Meyer points out that despite the vast economic inequalities among states, there is a world culture that creates significant isomorphisms among nation-states and helps keep this decentralized world polity together. The global system of nation-states is based on global norms that define external and internal sovereignty and is instantiated and reproduced through the similarity of the goals of 'equality' and 'progress' pursued by all nation-states. In other words, world level cultural and organizational directives for development and progress have resulted in nation-state uniformity as all states follow similar objectives, policies and programs. Meyer develops this argument with a study of the national educational systems in the post world war II era.⁵⁷ Connie McNeely elaborates on this concept of world

⁵⁶ Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity" in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (ed.), Global Modernities, Sage Publications, London, 1995; 25-44.

⁵⁷ I draw this discussion of Meyer's work from Peter Beyer, Religion and Globalization, Sage Publication, 1994; pp. 21-26.

culture by showing how international organizations like the UN set normative and prescriptive standards of behavior for state practices (increasingly conformed to by nation-states around the world), and in doing so play a role in institutionalizing the nation-state system. She specifically shows how the nation-state system has been standardized and reproduced through the invention and spread of national income statistics, resulting from the efforts of UN statisticians and from the UN collection and dissemination of comparative tables.⁵⁸ At least in this sense, the homogenization thrust of globalization reproduces and sustains the nation-state system, rather than threaten its existence.

But what of the globalization of identities, in particular through the homogenizing imperatives of global consumer capitalism? Benjamin Barber describes the homogenizing drives of “McWorld” (or what has also been called the “MacDonaldization” of the world), which has created a ‘commercialized’ and ‘depoliticized’ world.⁵⁹ Kenichi Ohmae describes a consumerist world in which brand loyalty supplants national loyalty.⁶⁰ Can this world that is homogenized by the globalization of consumption erase the divisiveness of national allegiances? It is questionable whether corporate icons can provide the kind of collective identity solidarity that national identities provide, and this is perhaps one reason for the ‘global localization’ that Ohmae points to, in which product marketing adapts to local (often interpreted as national) conditions, or what has come to known as

⁵⁸ Connie L. McNeely, Constructing the Nation-State, Greenwood Press, Westport, 1995.

⁵⁹ Benjamin R. Barber, “Jihad Vs. McWorld”, The Atlantic Monthly, March 1992; 53-63.

⁶⁰ K. Ohmae, The Borderless World, Harper Business, London, 1990.

“micro-marketing”.⁶¹ But it is these depoliticized identities that also create the impetus to “resecure parochial identities” so as to “escape McWorld’s dully insistent imperatives”, or what Barber calls the “Jihads” that lead to the “Lebanonization of the world”.⁶² In other words, the consumerist homogenization of the world pulls in many directions, and creates sometimes overlapping and sometimes contradictory identities and interests. Transnational, global identities defined through the commercialized symbols of “Nike” or more syncretic symbols as in “World Beat music”, co-exist with nationalist searches for particularistic identities and new imaginings of ‘tradition’ and ‘history’. While the imperatives of economic globalization force nation-states to remain open to these forces of global homogenization, nationalist assertions of identity call for

⁶¹ Writers on cultural globalization are increasingly pointing out the problems with conceptualizing this process simply as “Westernization” or “Americanization”, not simply because it fails to take account of the ways in which global marketing strategies are increasingly “indigenized”, but also because it negates the agency of other (particularly third world) societies in shaping the contemporary world. See John Tomlinson for an excellent study of the agency of local audiences in receiving and interpreting Western media messages. (John Tomlinson, Cultural Imperialism: a Critical Introduction, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, 1991) See Stuart Hall (1990) for a discussion of how the emerging global culture is “syncretic” or “hybrid”, and Jan Nederveen Pieterse for an account of globalization as a process of “hybridization”. (Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization” in Featherstone, et al, Global Modernities, 1995.) Similarly, Peter Beyer points out, in the sense that “globalization *begins* in all parts of the globe except the West as an exogenous process...globalization *is* Western imperialism”, but globalization is “more than the spread of one historically existing culture *at the expense* of all others.” The creation of a new global culture entails changes in the social contexts and cultures of all societies, in the West and the non-West. (Peter Beyer, Religion and Globalization, pp. 8-9; first two italics from the text, last italic mine) See Jonathan Friedman for a critique that points out that hybridity and creolization are more forms of identification (and hence ways of essentializing) of non-Western cultures, and less a recognition of ‘impurities’ or ‘mixtures’ within dominant cultures. (Jonathan Friedman, Cultural Identity and Global Process, Sage Publications, London, 1994; see especially the chapter “Global system, globalization and the parameters of identity”).

⁶² Barber, 1992. Robert Cox point out that globalization should be seen as a dialectical process, so that the affirmation of difference is a dialectical response to the homogenization thrusts of globalization, even if the former lacks the material force of the latter. (Robert Cox, “A Perspective on Globalization”, in James H. Mittelman, Globalization: Critical Reflections, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1996: pp. 30)

certain kinds of cultural closure.⁶³ Ultimately, the future of nation-states depends somewhat on how these conflicting demands on national identity are balanced.⁶⁴

Let us turn now to the heterogenizing thrust of globalization, or what Robertson described as the “universalization of particularism”. We live in a world, Robertson claims, in which not only has the “expectation of uniqueness” become institutionalized and globally widespread, but the local and the particular itself is produced on the basis of global norms.⁶⁵ In other words, globalization of cultural norms has produced not just the legitimacy of the idea of the nation-state, but also the expectation that such nation-states should embody unique and distinct identities. This once again represents the globalization of the nationalist idea, the idea that nation-states are legitimate because the nation is a unique, authentic cultural entity, with its singular and distinct identity. Beyer in describing Robertson’s work calls this the “relativization of particularisms”, which leads to a

⁶³ Arjun Appadurai points out that even though ‘Americanization’ is never quite that simple, from a ‘local’ perspective it might sometimes be perceived as less of a threat than the cultural homogenization imposed by a dominant ethnic/ racial group closer at hand (eg. Russianization for the people of Soviet Armenia). But sometimes, these fears of homogenization can also be exploited by such dominant groups to maintain their own hegemony. See Arjun Appadurai, *ibid.* Similarly, it can be argued that for lower caste groups in India, the Hindu nationalist project of “Hinduization” (on upper-caste terms) is a more real and immediate threat than the relatively more remote fears of “Americanization” that the BJP exploits to maintain upper-caste hegemony.

⁶⁴ But there are other ways in which globalization creates a unifying force that crosses nation-state boundaries. Ronnie Lipschutz describes the emergence of a ‘Global Civil Society’, which are “self-conscious constructions of networks of knowledge and action, by decentred local actors, that cross the reified boundaries of space as though they were not there.” (Ronnie D. Lipschutz, “Reconstructing World Politics: The Emergence of Global Civil Society,” in *Millennium*, vol. 21, no. 3, 1992; 389-420: pp. 390) These are networks that span a variety of issue areas and involve many different kinds of actors (formed for instance with respect to environmental issues, human rights issues, etc) and are at least partially the result of a “norm-governed global system rooted in the global capitalist consumer culture”. (*ibid.*: 402) Movements and networks within this global civil society may or not be anti-state, but it is important if the emergence of this global civil society points to the growth of what Lipschutz calls “global consciousness”. By itself, the emergence of forms of global identity and consciousness does not threaten the nation-state, but it can certainly challenge the particularisms of nationalist allegiances, and does problematize the primacy of the nation-state in the study of world politics.

⁶⁵ Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity” in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (ed.), *Global Modernities*, 1995; 25-44: pp. 28.

search for particularistic identities.⁶⁶ The globalization of this idea creates the potential for assertions of national identity, and can ultimately create the impetus for fragmentation of existing nation-states that are somehow seen as 'inauthentic' and hence illegitimate. Such differentiations (or assertions of cultural particularisms) can also occur, we saw above, as a response to certain homogenizing drives of globalization ('jihad' as a response to 'McWorld'). But overall, these claims to particularisms represent the success of the nationalist idea. Assertions of collective identity both as an element of, as well as in response to, globalization is then more 'nation-producing' than 'nation-destroying'. This certainly is an effect of globalization that, in keeping with the argument of the last section on fragmentation, not a threat to the nation-state, but a measure of its success.

Some Concluding Thoughts on the Future of the Nation-State

What then can we say about the future of the nation-state? There are no doubt a number of threats to the coherence and durability of particular existing nation-states, but does that weaken the nation-state as a historical form, as a universal organizing principle for collective cultural and political identity? Certainly, the severe crisis of particular nation-states, such as Somalia, Afghanistan, Bosnia, Rwanda, Burundi can generate a sense of apprehension about the future of the nation-state itself. Yet, this sense of crisis has not permeated across the globe and most existing nation-states remain relatively stable and viable despite the existence of various ethno-nationalist movements

⁶⁶ Beyer, *Ibid*: pp. 27

within them. Of course, nation-states are never completely stable entities or finished products. Recent literature within critical International Relations has attempted to show how the production and reproduction of national boundaries is an ongoing, continuous, and always incomplete project of the state.⁶⁷ In other words, it is not simply the security dilemma in an international anarchical 'state of nature' that reproduces the nation-state system as in realist accounts within international relations, but this is a complex process that requires active and constant political labor. The success of the nationalist project lies in erasing the visible politics of nation-building, in making it appear as though the nation is a pre or non-political entity, with its singular origin and destiny, and the state its legitimate political voice. But theories of the social world need to make visible and account for the politics of this process.

But even if it were the case that the problem of nation-building became more acute across the globe, as existing nation-states failed to accommodate ethno-nationalist demands within the institutional structures of the existing state, would it create a crisis of the nation-state as a historical political form? The sense of crisis, as John Dunn points out, comes "less from a weakening in the appeals of the idea of the nation than from a lessening in the cogency (normative or practical) of the idea of the state."⁶⁸ Fragmentation of existing nation-states on the basis of collective assertions to sub-nationalist identity represents, as I argued

⁶⁷ See John Macmillan and Andrew Linklater (ed.), Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations, Pinter Publishers, London, 1995; Michael Shapiro and Hayward Alker (ed.), Challenging Boundaries, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995 for collections of articles on the production and challenges to national boundaries. See David Campbell, Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1992 for an excellent discussion of how foreign policy is a form of statecraft that serves to produce and reproduce national boundaries.

above, the success of the ideal of nation-state. But what then about the efficacy and competence of the state, as a particular form of political authority structure? Globalization, both economic and cultural, does affect the ability of the state to shape society and the economy. But globalization is a complex process, and its effects do not simply impair the state. The state can be an active agent of globalization. There are as we saw above, elements of globalization that actually strengthen the nation-state system. But there are also forces that can weaken the legitimacy of the state. The question is, how does the state fare in the face of those forces?⁶⁹ Building legitimacy in the state is important for the continuation of the state, and it is important to explore the ways in which states that find their autonomy threatened, are affected by this process. Relegating some kinds of authority to supranational entities, or devolving power downwards through decentralization are ways of coping with these changes, and can help retain state legitimacy rather than threaten it. The construction of new discourses of “state-legitimacy”, that articulate the state to different functions, and help create new expectations from the state, could also aid in the same process. There have always been and will be a variety of different authority structures in the world. The future of the nation-state depends on the extent to, and the manner in which, existing nation-states continue to interact with those structures.

How could the nation-state cease to exist? While the downward devolution of nation-states through fragmentation does not lead to the demise of

⁶⁸ John Dunn, *ibid*; pp. 9.

⁶⁹ Istvan Hont points out that “the theory of ‘state-building’, as a guide for understanding the ‘nation-state’ is first and foremost an application of the theory of the state itself. It handles the ‘nation’ prefixed to the dyad ‘nation-state’, or ‘national state’, not as a genuinely constitutive agency, but as an important

the nation-state, the leaking of sovereignty upwards toward supranational entities could logically end in the demise of the nation-state. But existing supranational entities like the European Union or international organizations like the UN do not necessarily threaten the nation-state system, and can in fact strengthen it as we saw above. However, if the process continues in a way that eventually a 'world state' emerges, this would surely mean the end of the nation-state. But nobody seriously foresees this as a possibility for the near future. If the kind of property relations that have defined the territorial claims of modern nation-states as John Ruggie has shown, is replaced by a different set of social relations, this would perhaps entail another transformation in the world polity and nation-states might cease to exist. Yet, this also does not seem to be happening. What is being noticed in accounts of the end of the nation-state are the existence and increased salience of other forms of community and structures of political authority, or what mainstream accounts within international relations that remain normed to the primacy of the nation-state, call 'non-state actors'.

But societies, as Mann points out, have never been unitary, but instead always, in prehistoric times as well as today, been composed of "a multiplicity of networks of interaction, many with differing, if overlapping and intersecting, boundaries".⁷⁰ Different sociospatial levels of social interaction (local/subnational, national, inter-national/geopolitical, transnational and global) continue to coexist (even if the salience of some become more important at

supporting actor playing out a specific role in consummating the teleology of 'state-building'." (Istvan Hont, *ibid.*, pp. 178-79)

⁷⁰ M. Mann, "Neither Nation-State nor Globalism" in *Environment and Planning*, vol. 28, no. 11, nov. 1996; 1960-4.

certain times), so that it never makes sense to say that we live in a world composed *essentially* of nation-states, or one characterized essentially by transnationalism and globalism. Meaningful human interaction occurs at, through and across all levels. According to Mann, we live in a world in which the linkages between the global, transnational, national and subnational are becoming more complex, but these are not changes that are “squeezing the nation-state out”.

Perhaps part of the problem is in the spatial imagery implicit in a ‘levels of analysis’ kind of formulation. David Campbell points out that in much of international relations scholarship, “any complexity surrounding the issue of actors and agency is represented by additional levels of analysis – such as the supplementing of national and international with local and global...complexity is always anchored in a “something-national” formulation, whether it be “international,” “multinational,” or “transnational.””⁷¹ Further, space within international relations has been understood in primarily geopolitical terms. But territorialism is one particular expression of spatial authority. Spatial authority, as radical geographers has shown, is not simply about the division and control of physical territory. Space can be divided by time, class, race, gender or other social categories. Or in other words, what is important is the social composition of space, as also the spatiality of social categories. “The state”, as Julian Saurin points out, “is one amongst a multitude of competing principles for social

⁷¹ David Campbell, “Political Prosaics, Transversal Politics, and the Anarchical World” in Michael Shapiro and Hayward Alker (ed.), Challenging Boundaries, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996; pp. 11.

organization.⁷² A spatial levels of analysis formulation fails to be able to account for the variety of ways that values and meanings are created in the world through the interaction of diverse systems of meanings, as well as understand the dynamics of a changing world. Hence “new issues” such as economics, environment, gender, religion are just added on to extant state-centric accounts of the world, and the question becomes one of the ‘survivability’ of the nation-state given these changes.

The nation-state remains one among other actors in world politics. The nation-state remains viable and significant, both in providing expressions of collective identity and as structures of governance and authority (and sites for resistance). The question, I believe, is not so much whether the nation-state will exist, but what ‘national identity’ means in the face of globalization and fragmentation. What this requires are careful, contextual, socio-historical studies of how existing nation-states are being reconstructed and reworked to remain salient and viable among other forms of socio-spatial organizations and communities.

National Identity in the Face of Globalization and Fragmentation: The Politics of Hindu Nationalism

“There appear to be two tendencies of some consequence which are going to define our future. The first is the relentless push of the global economy and communications, supported avidly by our rapidly growing middle class. Domestically, we will see the irresistible spread of competitive markets and social democracy...influenced increasingly by the homogeneous global

⁷² Julian Saurin, “The End of International Relations? The State and International Theory in the Age of Globalization” in John Macmillan and Andrew Linklater (ed.), Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations, Pinter Publishers, London, 1995: pp. 255-6.

culture. The second is the growing consciousness of religious identity, which is leading to fundamentalist and separatist attitudes... This tendency encourages conflict, instability, divisiveness, rigidity and irrationality. It is in sharp contrast to the former tendency which promotes peace, stability, integration, flexibility and rationality.”⁷³

Written in the vein of introspection about the future as India prepared to enter the 50th year of independence from British rule, the above article in the popular Indian daily, the Times of India, recognized globalization and fragmentation as the two dominant trends of the 21st century that face the country.⁷⁴ The author goes on to situate the two trends as part of larger global trends⁷⁵ and associate them with the visions of Francis Fukuyama and Samuel Huntington respectively. However, in a rather easy resolution of the possible contradictions of the two visions for the future of India, the author ends on an optimistic note on the grounds that while economic liberalization will enable “rapid growth and a dramatic reduction in poverty in the future”, the rise of Hindu nationalism in India has a “silver lining” since religiosity will protect Indians from the atomization and alienation that has accompanied liberalism in the West,

⁷³ Gurcharan Das, “Nation at Fifty: Competing Visions of Our Future”, Times of India, August 19th, 1996.

⁷⁴ Similarly, a scholarly article on the crisis of the Indian nation-state refers to “(t)he two types of trends which have imperiled the health of nation-states recently, internationalization of production and control pressing from above and local resentments undermining it from below...” (Sudipta Kaviraj, “Crisis of the Nation-State in India”, Political Studies, XLII, 1994: pp. 123)

⁷⁵ On the one hand, “... the number of democracies based on free markets has grown from 31 in 1975 to 83 in 1995. In addition 62 countries are in the midst of “market friendly” economic reforms, including the 14 largest developing countries. The world is also enthusiastically embracing middle class values and the lifestyle of the jeans-coke-MTV popular culture.” On the other hand, “(t)ribalism, ethnicity and fundamentalism have grown over the past decade. Bosnia is the most dramatic example, but there were by the last UN count 37 hot spots of ethnic strife in the world. The growth of Islamic fundamentalism is the most widely reported... Fundamentalist movements are also growing in Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism.” (Das, 1996)

thus preventing Indians from leading a “dull, banal and bleak life”. “The challenge”, the author concludes, “is to keep religion a private matter”.⁷⁶

However, it is this ‘challenge’ to keep religion a private matter that the BJP itself challenges. Further, the BJP makes this challenge quite directly in the form of a response to the forces of globalization and fragmentation. In other words, the BJP claims to represent the Hindu/Indian nation and its stake to state power is predicated on a particular kind of Hindu nationalist response to those forces. I will elaborate on how the BJP responds to globalization and fragmentation more specifically in chapters six and seven. Here, I will briefly indicate the main contours of the argument.

Chapter seven also points to how the concept of the nation-state undergirds the BJP discourse on secularism. An article in the BJP published journal, BJP Today, makes it clear that for all the talk of “internationalism”, the nation-state is here to stay.

The nation-state, for all the crimes committed in its name, is still the primary source of loyalty for most people. Although there is an international market and the rudiments of what could be called a global culture, there is no such thing as an international loyalty. No one gets a lump in his throat standing before the blue-and-white United Nations flag.⁷⁷

Given this unproblematic acceptance of the nation-state, the question that plagues much of BJP discourse is how the nation-state fares in the face of globalization and fragmentation. The rearticulation of national identity that the BJP effects is

⁷⁶ ibid

⁷⁷ Anonymous, “Internationalism cannot displace Nationalism, It can only Complement it”, BJP Today, July 1-15, 1995: pp. 25.

predicated on the particular kind of response that Hindu nationalism provides to that question.

The rise of Hindu nationalism in the mid to late 1980s was accompanied by the liberalization programs adopted by the Indian government that led to the increased integration of a relatively closed and state-run economy into the global economy. Now, even though the party has in general been favourable and welcoming to domestic deregulation and foreign capital, the Hindu nationalist position on economic liberalization has not been without its ambivalences, contradictions and paradoxes.⁷⁸ There are at least two aspects to the BJP's response to globalization that helps ground its own claim to national and state power in postcolonial India. First, the party makes its own claim to state power on the basis of a sustained and pointed critique of the postcolonial developmentalist state, installed and consolidated under the rule of the Congress party. Critiques of the over-regulated economy and the sprawling, inefficient, and corrupt bureaucratic apparatus have of course come from many quarters – scholarly, journalistic, and popular. What the BJP does is to appropriate this discourse on 'state incompetence', and project itself as the first and only political party that has consistently taken a position in favour of domestic liberalization. In other words, if globalization casts doubts on the ability of the state to effectively administer its domestic economy, and maintain international competitiveness, the BJP speaks directly to that doubt, and makes its claim to state power on the grounds of providing a 'competent state'.

Second, if under globalization the autonomy of the state becomes suspect, what the party and in particular its affiliated organizations have been most successful in doing is to speak to the anxieties and insecurities generated by the flooding of the Indian marketplace with Western media products and consumer goods. Chapter six details how indeed the BJP speaks to those concerns. Here it is important to note that while the BJP speaks in the name of that ‘particularized universalism’ - the nation-state - it does so by invoking the ‘particularity’ of the Indian nation-state in the face of the homogenization thrust of cultural globalization. In the face of this homogenization onslaught, the BJP offers that irresistible particularity – ‘authenticity’, notwithstanding that that authenticity is a problematic and exclusivist cultural construct. This need for ‘authenticity’ is not simply the ‘universalized particularism’ that all nation-states aspire to, but also reflects a particular post-colonial desire situated within the global hierarchies of power and knowledge. In other words, it is not just the fear of losing ones cultural particularity, but the more concrete fear of losing that cultural particularity *to the West* that is at issue here. Hence, the BJP ‘resistance’ to globalization is couched primarily as an attack against ‘Westernization’ (read ‘cultural imperialism’), but also against the global power of Western multinational corporations and media conglomerates (read ‘economic imperialism’). Articulated in this manner, the BJP is able to appropriate some of the political ground that the Congress (and some of the leftist parties) have ceded in their celebration of liberalization, as well as speak to the concerns of the

⁷⁸ Part of this ambivalence comes from the pressure brought to bear on the party by certain segments within the Hindu nationalist ranks who are strong advocates of *Swadeshi* (economic

growing Indian middle classes, including many who would otherwise oppose the party's exclusivist ideology.

The BJP discourse on the nation-state also taps quite effectively into the fear of fragmentation. An article in BJP Today that bemoans “the forces of extremism, terrorism and separatism” that “threaten the very foundations of pluralistic States”, also points out that the principle of ‘self-determination’, while useful in the immediate post-colonial era, has now “played its role in history and the concept is no longer helpful in resolving the problems of multi-ethnic societies.”⁷⁹ He goes on to argue that it is now “recognized that self-determination movements undermine the potential for democratic development in non-democratic countries and threaten the foundations of democracy in democratic ones”, and so it “must be underlined that the territorial integrity of large multi-ethnic States which have a special responsibility for millions of their citizens, is inviolable.”⁸⁰ Chapter seven shows how the BJP discourse on the nation draws quite prominently on this theme of ‘territorial integrity’ (also not without its share of ambiguities), with particular implications for the BJP conception of the state. I argue that since the constituting moment for post-colonial India is inextricably tied to the violent experience and collective memory of the partition of the Indian subcontinent (into India and Pakistan), what I call the ‘specter of partition’ carries tremendous political weight in Indian political

nationalism).

⁷⁹ Brajesh Misra, speech by member of the Indian Delegation to the third committee of the 49th session of U.N. General Assembly, New York, on Oct 17, 1994, reproduced as “Forces of Terrorism and Separatism are Threatening the Unity and Foundation of Pluralistic States”, in BJP Today, Jan 1-15, 1995: pp. 16. (The ‘S’ in states is capitalized in the text)

discourse. Hence, even though it is common to celebrate the multi-ethnic, postcolonial success of the “world’s largest democracy”, the possible ‘fragmentation’ of this multi-ethnic polity has always stretched the limits of Indian democracy. This has been demonstrated repeatedly throughout India’s postcolonial history, but the cases of Punjab and Kashmir (covered in chapter five) have perhaps received the most international attention. The BJP discourse on Indian national unity plays considerably on the fragmentation issue raised with respect to Punjab and Kashmir, as well as North-East India, by repeatedly invoking the ‘specter of partition’. Chapter seven documents how this occurs.

If one was to explore the discourse of Hindu nationalism in India, the “future of the nation-state” would seem safe and secure. The nation-state remains an integral part of BJP discourse. The question that this dissertation raises is how the BJP articulates “national identity”, given the unproblematic acceptance of the nation-state construct. I turn now to an extensive analysis over the next three chapters on how Indian *national* identity is rearticulated through Hindu nationalist discourse.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*: pp. 16-17. Note that author uses the term “multi-ethnic”, rather “multi-national” state. As I show in chapter seven, rejecting the characterization of India as “multi-national” is critical to the BJP discourse on the nation-state.

Chapter Five

Orientalism and the Production of Religious Communities

Introduction

Arguing that social categories are both historically and socially contextual, the next two chapters attempt to look at how the widely accepted category of 'secular' took on a particular set of meanings in the context of post-colonial Indian national identity, and how those meanings are being transformed in the political, economic and cultural conditions of the late 20th century with the rise of Hindu nationalism. The next chapter locates this transformation within a larger context of the economic and social dislocations caused by failed developmentalist projects and late capitalism, and the new discontents generated through the more recent adoption of neoliberal economic policies by the Indian state in an increasingly globalized political economy. In other words, the attempt is to show how periods of significant economic, political and social changes provide the conditions in which (the always ongoing) negotiation of nationalist ideology becomes particularly salient. It is in periods of changes that existing cultural meanings, whose articulations are always both contingent and political, become increasingly unstable and tenuous, and provide the conditions for rearticulations. It is in this context that the rise of Hindu nationalism has revealed certain contradictions in a taken-for-granted secular nationalism that is being reconstructed to create a new kind of exclusionary national ideology that hinges on a Hindu/Muslim axis.

This chapter is an attempt to explore the historical and social construction of this 'taken-for-granted' of post-colonial Indian politics. The rearticulations that Hindu

nationalism effects always have to draw on existing structures of meanings and practices, the available discursive pre-understandings, the existing forms of knowledge in society. In the first part of the chapter, I begin by exploring how the taken-for-granted in much of contemporary political discourses on the both the right and left in India - that Hindus and Muslims exist as two distinct communities, with different identities and (and often conflicting) interests - is a consequence of particular historical and social circumstances, constructed through various forms of knowledge and practices of the colonial state as well as the emerging anti-colonial struggles of the 19th and early 20th centuries. In exploring how secularism connects with the project of modernity, this chapter examines the role of Orientalist knowledge and colonial practices in the construction of religious communities and religious identities in India.

However, even though the construction of religious communities and communalism can be traced in many ways to the colonial period, it is still the case that certain forms of divisions and antagonisms between religious communities exist now as institutionalized political facts. To an extent the post-colonial Indian state inherited certain mechanisms of governance from the colonial state that reproduced and exacerbated such divisions, and this is reflected in particular in the electoral politics of both Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. In the second part of this chapter I point to some of the key 'moments' during Congress rule that intensified the communalisation¹ of post-colonial Indian politics, and in a sense, created the ideological space for the rise and electoral success of the BJP. In the next two chapters, I will trace out how the Hindu Right came to occupy that space quite effectively and the manner in which it stakes its

claims to Hindu identity by drawing on existing understandings of 'Indian secularism', giving it a novel and particularistic accent in the process.

Orientalism, Colonialism and Anti-Colonial Nationalisms: The Construction of Religion and Religious Communities

“Orientalism is the generic term that I have been employing to describe the Western approach to the Orient; Orientalism is the discipline by which the Orient was (and is) approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery, and practice. But in addition I have been using the work to designate that collection of dreams, images, and vocabulary available to anyone who has tried to talk about what lies east of the dividing line.”²

“Orientalism...is not just a way of thinking. It is a way of conceptualizing the landscape of the colonial world that makes it susceptible to certain kinds of management”.³

How religion, religious essences and religious communities are defined in contemporary India owes itself significantly to the Orientalist production of knowledge of India that included Indological studies of Hindu India, the writing of Indian historiography, and scientific empiricist research based on classifications, facts and data on India. As shown below, modern European research on India from the late eighteenth century focused primarily on classical languages and religions, and created a whole body

¹ 'Communalism' as used in the Indian subcontinent refers to collective antagonisms organized around linguistic, ethnic, and most commonly, religious differences. That is how the words 'communal', 'communalism' and 'communalisation' are used in this chapter.

² Edward Said, Orientalism. Vintage Books, New York. 1979: pp.73.

³ Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, "Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament", in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (ed.), Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993: pp 6.

of knowledge on the 'spiritual essence' of Hindu India. The writing of Indologists relied almost exclusively on Brahminical sources - Vedas and Shastras and Sanskrit texts and used Brahmins as interpreters - and this became the basis for defining Hindu law and Hinduism. In addition, modern historiography of India was based on the linear periodization of Indian history into Hindu, Muslim and British epochs. Written into this narrative were various Orientalist assumptions about the 'Muslim other' with respect to the 'Western self'. Further, these forms of knowledge were linked to particular kinds of colonial practices - censuses, judicial and legislative administration, regulation of social practices, etc. Differentiations and separations between Hindus and Muslims were written into colonial law and built into colonial administration. Such colonial discourses and practices thus helped produce certain kinds of 'empirical realities' in the form of separate and antagonistic religious communities, and religious identities and subjectivities. At the same time, as I show below, such Orientalism also set the parameters of Indian nationalist discourse and practice during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Nationalist historiography and anti-colonial discourses and movements drew on this Orientalist framework, and the implicit communal divisions written into them, thus helping produce and reproduce many of the 'realities' that the post-colonial Indian state and society inherited.

This is not to argue that religious claims in terms of Hindu or Muslim identity were not made in pre-colonial times, or that conflicts between Hindus and Muslims did not exist prior to colonialist interventions. But as Sudipta Kaviraj points out, "under conditions of modernity, *their way of being* Hindus and Muslims changes fundamentally", so that "the organization and perception of social difference was altered, irreversibly changing peoples' images of their collective selves and their occupancy of the

social world.”⁴ It was the construction of rigid, antagonistic boundaries with a timeless quality attributed to them that was an outcome of modern, colonialist (and nationalist) practices, and their place in the description of India and Indian politics came to take on a certain prominence that continues to reflect itself in contemporary writings on India. As ordinary people came to see themselves as members of these ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ religio-political communities, that were ascribed with particular kinds of ‘intentions’ and ‘actions, modernity created a new ontology that had, and continues to have, certain kinds of political implications.

The Construction of Orientalist Dichotomies: Spiritual East/Materialist West

In Indological studies of Indian religions, the influence of German idealist thinking reflected itself in defining the ‘essence’ of Hinduism in terms of its ‘spirituality’. This was reflected for instance in Max Mueller’s scholarship on Indian languages and culture.⁵ This attempt to distill the essence of Hinduism relied on a certain variant and interpretation of the Brahmanical, Vedantic tradition in India.⁶ Counterposed to this ‘spiritual essence’ of India was the ‘material rationalism’ of Western modernity. Ronald Inden has critiqued such essentialized depictions of India in Orientalist scholarship as a ‘feminine presence’ - a soft sponge of spirituality and infinite absorptive powers versus Western rational masculinity.⁷ (Inden, 1990)

⁴ Sudipta Kaviraj, “Crisis of the Nation-state in India”, Political Studies, XLII, 1994: pp 117-8, my italics.

⁵ Thomas Blom Hansen, “Globalization and Nationalist Imaginations: Hindutva’s Promise of Equality through Difference”, in Economic and Political Weekly, March 9, 1996; 603-616.

⁶ See Peter van der Veer, “The Foreign Hand: Orientalist Discourse in Sociology and Communalism”, in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (ed.), Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1993.

⁷ Ronald Inden, Imagining India, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1990.

There were at least two kinds of nationalist responses to this Orientalist reading, both of which largely accepted the dichotomy of this framework. In the hands of early nationalists such as Vivekananda, this construction of Hindu spirituality is accepted and articulated to the idea of the 'Hindu nation' at the same time that the dichotomy is inverted, so that the 'superiority' of Hindu spirituality is juxtaposed against a decadent and corrupting Western materialism. In this framework, the Orientalist ontological dichotomy between the East and the West remains intact. Vivekananda's work inspired both Gandhi and Radhakrishnan, in whose philosophies non-violence and tolerance could be seen as essentially Hindu values flowing from the spirituality of the Vedanta.⁸

The other nationalist response to this Orientalist reading of Hinduism's weakness, incoherence, and irrationality was in the form of the Hindu reformist movements in the mid 19th century like the Arya Samaj and the Brahmo Samaj, which were emulatory of what were seen as the strengths of semitic religions such as Islam and Christianity - organization, rigour, discipline, martial valour.⁹ Daniel Gold has called such revivalist movements 'organized Hinduisms', and has pointed out how the attempt to adapt to Western models required some fairly drastic transformations of the structures of traditional religions, such as the replacement of "caste membership" by "committee

⁸ Even though Gandhi is often understood as one of the very few nationalists who was able to transcend Western influences in his thinking, van der Veer (*ibid*) points out how Gandhian secularism in that sense also remained wedded to an Orientalist framework. I will elaborate on the problematic appropriation of Gandhi in contemporary Hindu nationalism later in the dissertation.

⁹ See Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1983 for an excellent critical analysis of such 19th century Hindu revivalist movements. It is important to remember in this context that Hindu 'conservatives' and 'traditionalists' who are associated with the movements of Hindu revivalism were essentially 'modernizing' Hindus. But this is not to claim that the 'orthodoxy' as represented in *Sanatan Dharm* (against which these revivalist movements arose) was any more 'authentically' traditional in its drawing on the systematized Brahmanical scriptural written canon established by Orientalist scholarship as "true Hinduism" over the fragmented, oral traditions. The point again is that rather than assume that the 'traditional' is unproblematically pre-modern or non-modern, one needs to interrogate how indeed tradition comes to be constructed (and what purposes and interests such constructions serve).

memberships”¹⁰, which raised further questions about the external boundaries and socioreligious divisions within the Hindu community.¹¹ But in general, these movements accepted the Orientalist reading of Hinduism, and sought to ‘rectify’ its feminized weaknesses to offer a more effective resistance to a masculinized colonialism.¹² In chapter seven, I will show how both these nationalist responses – ‘spiritual, tolerant, Hinduism’ and ‘organized, militant, Hinduism’ – for all their apparent contradictions, come to cohere in the discourse of contemporary Hindu nationalism.

The Writing of Modern Historiography

By the late nineteenth century, the historical narrative of India in European Indological scholarship was based on a linear periodization of Indian history into successive Hindu, Muslim and British periods, laid out most prominently in James Mill’s influential The History of British India. This narrative provided for a “classical age of Hinduism” that declined from the eighth to the eighteenth century medieval period leading to the “despotic rule of Muslim invaders”, which in a sense provided the ideological justification for colonial intervention in the subsequent “British period of renaissance”. The writing of this historical narrative was significantly informed by European Orientalist assumptions with respect to Islam and Muslims.¹³ Hence stereotypes about the behavioural characteristics of Muslims as lustful, warlike and

¹⁰ Which however never really resolved the ‘problem of caste’, the hierarchies of caste continuing to manifest themselves in various ways within these organizations.

¹¹ Daniel Gold, “Organized Hinduisms”, in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (ed.), Fundamentalisms Observed, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991: pp 533. The question of “who is a Hindu” has plagued Hindu nationalist movements right from the start, so much so that contemporary Hindu nationalism continues to expend considerable political labour in answering that question. More on this in chapter seven.

¹² Nandy (1983) offers a very interesting discussion of such anti-colonialist movements expressing themselves through the norms of “hypermasulinity”.

¹³ See chapter three for a discussion of Anglo-European Orientalism vis-à-vis Islam and Muslims.

fanatical, and the tyranny of Islamic rule helped construct the medieval Muslim period in Indian history as a period of decline and darkness. This narrative of Indian history marked off and 'fixed' certain kinds of (religious) distinctions in a complex history of the interactions between different groups. More importantly for my purposes here, communalisation of Indian history provided the discursive resources for Hindu nationalist glorification of a 'Hindu past' in the history of India.¹⁴

From the late eighteenth century this Orientalist writing of Indian history and society informed the interpretation and writing of nationalist history. Partha Chatterjee shows how the historical claims of the Hindu nationalist movement draw on these modern forms of historiography. Chatterjee shows how the criteria of "true historical account" set by European historical scholarship that had established that India had no prior true historical account, was largely accepted by nationalist historiography. Hence the nationalist celebration of the Hindu/Indian past required the drawing of 'evidence' from Orientalist scholarship. For Indian nationalists then, to claim the Indian nation as the historical agency to complete the project of modernity required reclaiming ancient India (i.e. 'Hindu India') as the classical source of Indian modernity.¹⁵ This contestation to British colonialism by a glorified reclamation of Hindu India implicitly accepted all the prejudices of European Orientalist scholarship with respect to Islam and Muslims.

Science and Modernity: The Rule of Categories and Numbers

Other scholars have shown how the post-Enlightenment pursuit of objective science manifested itself in a positivist empiricism in which the production of 'factual'

¹⁴ See Romila Thapar, Harbans Mukhia and Bipin Chandra, Communalism and the Writing of Indian History, People's Publishing House, Delhi. 1969.

knowledge about India became linked to colonialist administrative practices. David Ludden, in what he calls “Orientalist empiricism”, shows how this generation of data about India culled through various sources both established the foundational basis of Indian society in the facticity of its “autonomous village communities” that existed from “time immemorial”, and “Hindu religion” and “the caste system” as the forces sustaining Indian tradition. Ludden argues that it was this discourse on Indian social reality that made it possible to locate India in a “conceptual template” within modern world history.¹⁶

Appadurai extends this argument to show how contemporary post-colonial Indian politics of caste and communalism have their roots in the colonialist project of quantification and the enumeration of populations. By focusing on the quantitative, numerical side of the classification of India by the colonial state, he shows how “numerical majorities” were constructed and given prominence in the censuses, and became the basis of caste and communal politics.¹⁷ Rather than think of censuses as objective categories, this shows how systems of classifications produce communities and collective identities. The decennial census, introduced in 1871, formally defined and classified Indians according to religious categories. The operations of the census from the 1870s onward required and consolidated clear and firm boundaries for purposes of enumeration and control through classification. This is evidenced for instance in 1911 when Census Commissioner E.A. Gait rebuked the Bombay census superintendent for using the hybrid term “Hindu-Muhammadans” for some groups whose responses and

¹⁵ Partha Chatterjee, “History and Nationalization of Hinduism”, in Social Research, Vol. 59, No. 1, Spring 1992; 111-149.

¹⁶ David Ludden, “Introduction: Ayodhya: A Window on the World”, in David Ludden (ed.) Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1996: pp 259.

¹⁷ Arjun Appadurai, “Number in the Colonial Imagination”, in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (ed.), 1993.

customs refused clear identification: adding that he should have relegated “the persons concerned to the one religion or the other as best he could.”¹⁸ Even though the ‘Hindu majority’ and the ‘Muslim minority’ in India are now accepted as self-evident, these categories were not always as clearly differentiated, and were partially the product of these early classificatory schemes.

These attempts at the demarcation and consolidation of boundaries had the effect of producing distinct and separate religious communities, whose interests were assumed to be different and potentially conflictual. Further, this established certain ‘facts’ about the Indian population such as - who belonged to the majority community and who belonged to the minority communities, who were the legitimate ‘representatives’ of these communities, what ‘practices’ and ‘customs’ marked off one community from another, etc. As the next section shows, colonial administration and justice needed to acknowledge and account for the separate and different interests of these communities.

Colonial Administrative Practices

In recognizing the separateness of different religious communities in India, colonial administrative practices had the further effect of reproducing and consolidating the boundaries around the Hindu and Muslim communities in India. In many ways, the Orientalist knowledge inherent in this colonialist enterprise created a discursive framework for later colonial policy to “divide and rule” Hindus and Muslims.

Rosane Rocher points out how Hastings’ benign attempts to prevent the home administration of the East India company to apply British common law for the

¹⁸ Gait 1912, I:i, 118 from Sumit Sarkar, “Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva”, in David Ludden David (ed.), 1996.

administration of justice in India, that led to the 1772 Judicial Plan, reduced the cultural and religious diversity of India to a simple division into Hindu and Muslim laws.¹⁹ Further, the decision to apply native law was only “in all suits regarding inheritance, marriage, caste, and other religious usages, or institutions” that fell within what were seen as falling within the purview of religion. This itself implicated the British administration in demarcating the area of religion (or ‘personal law’) from that outside it, the latter being subject to British laws and regulations.²⁰ Further, for the formulation of Hindu law, as Rocher points out, the British, relying on Orientalist knowledge that defined what counted as ‘Hindu law’, looked to texts, rather than local customs, in the process privileging Hindu law founded on the Sanskrit shastras and defined by Brahmanical norms. Once again this reliance on Orientalist scholarship which was based on Brahmanical views of Hinduism, in which notions of caste hierarchy (*varnashrama dharma*) were more clearly established, served to construct and consolidate a particular version of Hinduism as the ‘authentic’ Hinduism. Additionally, the categorizing of all non-Muslims, such as Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, or tribals as Hindus had the effect of making the Hindu majority appear even more overwhelming that it was. Rocher also points out how the eighteenth century British hostility of Muslims manifested itself in India as the British saw themselves as displacing Muslim powers in India, thus “protecting” the Hindu majority that had been “oppressed” by Muslim rule.

from Sarkar: 279

¹⁹ Rosane Rocher, “British Orientalism in the Eighteenth Century: The Dialectics of Knowledge and Government”, in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (ed.), 1993

²⁰ The established law codes written for Hindus and Muslims, and the particular interpretation ingrained in them, continues with some modification in post-colonial Indian society. However, while the Hindu Code Bill in postcolonial India introduced certain ‘reforms’ in the area of Hindu personal law, Muslim ‘personal law’ still remains under the jurisdiction of the ‘Muslim community’. This issue as we will see shortly in this chapter, and in much more detail in chapter seven, has been controversial, and highly politicized by the BJP in India.

The assumption of Hindu-Muslim antagonism informed colonial knowledge and practice, so that as Gyanendra Pandey has argued, the colonial state produced tons of data and statistics in its ethnography, census statistics, reports, laws and history, that both documents and constructs the existence of two separate religious communities and reads a primordial communal antagonism into all their interactions.²¹ Hence the implication of the colonial (and now the post-colonial) state in communalism was not just rendered invisible, but the interventionary and justificatory power of the imperial state were also strengthened in the process. As Sandria Freitag has pointed out, in their administrative practices, colonial officials made it a policy to consult with Hindu and Muslim leaders separately.²² This eventually culminated in separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims in 1909²³ that were in existence till 1947 when the disagreements on the division of power in post-independence India led to the partition of British India into India and Pakistan.²⁴

A series of colonial and anti-colonial knowledges and practices established certain kinds of boundaries and distinctions between Hindus and Muslims through the production

²¹ Gyanendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India, Oxford University Press, Delhi. 1990.

²² Sandria Freitag, Collective Action and Community: Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India. University of California Press, Berkeley. 1989.

²³ The Hindu Sabha initiated by local Arya Samajists (a Hindu reformist organization) in Punjab arose partially in response to what was seen as the pro-Muslim bias of the British administration in its granting of various concessions to the Muslim community, one of which was the setting up of separate electorates. Soon after, in the 1911 census, the Arya Samajists of the Punjab declared themselves to be not 'Aryas' as they had previously, but as 'Hindus'. (See Christophe Jaffrelot, "The genesis and development of Hindu nationalism in the Punjab: from the Arya Samaj to the Hindu Sabha (1875-1910)," in Indo-British Review, 21(1) :3-40.) This recognition of the need to make claims on the basis of "established categories", helped in the further consolidation of a Hindu identity.

²⁴ One of the demands of the Muslim League at the time of independence was for separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims. This reflected the Muslim League's fear of the political marginalization of Muslims in a Hindu-majority post-independence India. However, this was a demand that was not acceptable to the

of scholarship, the writing of history, the administration of the colony, etc. In the process was created a particular kind of 'empirical reality' in which Hindus and Muslims were seen, and often saw themselves as, members of separate, distinct and antagonistic communities. Even though the negotiation of these boundaries continues to exercise contemporary Hindu nationalism, this empirical reality framed the parameters of postcolonial Indian politics. As the next section argues, the very demarcation of majority (Hindu) and minority (Muslim) religious communities has implicated the post-colonial Indian state in patterns and strategies of governance that have created contradictory spaces for the contemporary rise of Hindu nationalist politics.

The Postcolonial Indian State and the 'Failure of Secularist Politics' under the Congress Government

Many of these divisions and oppositions were inherited by the postcolonial Indian state, and reproduced through its systems of governance. In particular, the period of Congress rule starting under the latter part of Indira Gandhi's government and that of Rajiv Gandhi's government, and its resort to what has been called 'vote-bank' politics, accentuated many of these divisions even further. The deinstitutionalisation of politics under Indira Gandhi's centralizing leadership and her increasingly populist political style led from the early 1980s to the manipulation of religion and religious communities for political gain.²⁵ This trend continued under Rajiv Gandhi's prime ministership. The

Indian National Congress, that envisioned a liberal-secular India grounded on individual rights. The Constitution of India - Article 292 - prohibits separate electorates for Muslims.

²⁵ Indira Gandhi's centralizing drives from the 1960s, especially after the dramatic decline in Congress popularity in the 1967 national elections resulted in the destruction of the institutional links of the old Congress party with state and local politics, as she adopted a populist posture of direct links with the masses. In particular, Indira Gandhi and the central government started playing a direct interventionist role in state politics, undermining considerably India's federalist structure. Increasingly, central policies became

failure of the pro-poor populist strategy in the “*Garibi Hatao*” (Remove Poverty) campaign of the Congress(I)²⁶ under the leadership of Indira Gandhi in the 1970s, the loss of support among rural groups under Rajiv Gandhi’s first attempts at liberalization in the early 1980s, and the growing support for alternative political parties that spoke specifically to lower-caste and class (and Muslim) interests since the 1980s were all partially responsible for the politicization of religious differences and religious symbols by the ‘secular’ Congress(I) since the 1980s. Courting leaders of religious communities, granting concessions to religious groups, using religious symbols in popular campaigns brought issues of religious differences and conflicts between religious communities much more prominently into the public eye. The contemporary resurgence and popularity of Hindu nationalism can be partially traced to these developments in mainstream Indian politics. In a sense, the BJP has seized upon the ideological space created by the Congress party. This is a space that the Congress cannot *claim* to occupy without jeopardizing its secular credentials even as it continues to do so in practice, but is one that the BJP can and has grabbed very effectively, and as argued in chapter seven, it is doing so by changing the very meanings around the category of ‘secularism’. This attempt to

focused on maintaining a Congress government in a state under a Chief Minister who was personally loyal to the Prime Minister. Often this led to the support of more extremist leaders with secessionist agendas at the expense of more moderate leaders with a wider local support base. This happened in Punjab and Kashmir in the 1980s as argued below, as well as in Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and was a trend that continued under (especially the later phase of) Rajiv Gandhi’s leadership. (See Paul R. Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence*, Cambridge University Press, New York. 1994; Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995; Atul Kohli, *The State and Poverty in India*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 1987; Rajni Kothari, *State Against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance*. Ajanta Publication, Delhi. 1988)

(See Brass, 1993; Jalal; Kohli, 1987, 1994; Kothari, 1988)

²⁶ The Congress(I) refers to the dominant successor of the Congress party (the I refers to Indira), after the second splintering of the Congress party in 1977, following an unsuccessful challenge to Indira Gandhi’s leadership from within the party.

borrow some of the *Hindutva*²⁷ appeal in light of its dwindling electoral support by the Congress is what Aijaz Ahmad has called the ‘pragmatic communalism’ of the Congress against the ‘programmatically communalism’ of the BJP’.²⁸ Here I point to some of the ‘key moments’ in this process. As we will see in later chapters, many of the issues pointed to here occur within the BJP discourse on the “failure of Indian secularism”.

Punjab

In Punjab in the 1980s, the ruling Congress(I) party under Indira Gandhi actively supported and promoted an extremist, communalist faction of the party led by Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale in order to weaken its major opposition in the state, the Sikh-based regional party, the Akali Dal. Bhindranwale’s anti-Hindu militant orientation, subdued under more moderate Sikh leadership, was to later result in widespread violence and massacres in Punjab. The launch of Operation Bluestar that involved the storming of the Golden Temple in Amritsar by state troops led to the death of Bhindranwale and many of his followers, as well as many innocent civilians. The assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by a Sikh bodyguard to avenge Operation Bluestar was followed by the massacres of Sikhs and the burning and looting of Sikh homes and businesses in Delhi, aided and abetted by the Indian police as well as Congress(I) workers and members of parliament.²⁹ Violence in Punjab continued till 1992, when strong police measures

²⁷ the ideology of Hindu nationalism

²⁸ Aijaz Ahmad, “In the Eye of the Storm: The Left Chooses”, in Economic and Political Weekly, June 1, 1996: 1329-1343; pp 1331.

²⁹ For an account of the anti-Sikh riots of November 1984 and the complicity of Congress(I) leaders and activists, see Who are the Guilty?, The Report of the People’s Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR) and the People’s Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), Delhi, 1984; The Report of the Citizen’s Commission, Delhi, 31 October to 4 November, 1984, Delhi, 1984; and Uma Chakravarty and Nandita Haksar, The Delhi Riots: Three Days in the Life of a Nation. Lancer International, New Delhi, 1987.

involving well-documented cases of police illegalities and excesses led to a partial abatement of the crisis.

The politicization of Hindu-Sikh relations has been critical in exacerbating the sense of religious antagonisms in contemporary India. This has played well into the BJP discourse of the Hindus as a “threatened majority” in India, fueled by the political instability in Punjab and the fear of separatism (or what I later in the dissertation call the ‘specter of partition’) evoked by Bhindranwale’s Khalistan movement, alleged to be supported by the Pakistani government. However, as we will see in chapter seven, beyond serving to trigger a sense of alarm at the possible disintegration of the Indian state, the Sikh community has not been identified as a possible source of threat to the Hindu/Indian nation. Deflecting away from the Hindu-Sikh divisions, Hindu nationalists have attempted to claim Sikhism as a part of the Hindu fold, blaming the creation of the division on the misperceived politics of the Congress government.

The Shah-Bano Case

When the traditional electoral support of the Muslim community for the Congress(I) Party was threatened, Rajiv Gandhi’s capitulation to the Islamic Right in the Shah Bano case resulted in a further communalisation of Indian politics. The case involved a 73 year old divorced Muslim woman who sued for maintenance from her former husband under section 125 of the Indian Code of Criminal Procedure. When the Supreme Court of India upheld the decision of the High Court on the provision of maintenance to Shah Bano, an orthodox section of the Muslim community protested that the court decision was opposed to Islamic law and violated the rights of the minority community in matters of personal law (that pertains to all matters of family, including

divorce and maintenance). On appeal from a powerful section of the Islamic clergy³⁰, and fearful of losing Muslim electoral support, Rajiv Gandhi forced a bill through Parliament - the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill, 1986 - annulling the court decision through legislation that allowed members of the Muslim community to be exempt from the civil code in matters of alimony.³¹

Without going into the complexities of the various issues of personal and community rights that this case brings up,³² it is important to note here that this particular event served to catapult the Hindu-Muslim issue with a new prominence into the popular press and in public debates around the country. In the words of BJP leader L.K. Advani, the Bill "was a watershed event...The mood of the Hindus began building up after (it)..."³³. The politicization of Muslim personal law through the Shah Bano case

³⁰ There was much debate on this issue both within the Muslim community and with and among other groups, including several women's groups. This debate included differing interpretations of the *Shariat* (the body of Muslim religious law) and raised the question of whether the Supreme Court verdict violated the *Shariat*. (See Asghar Ali Engineer (ed.), The Shah Bano Controversy. Orient Longman, Bombay. 1987)

³¹ In the Supreme Court Judgement on the Shah Bano case, the judges raise the significance of evolving a common civil code as stated in Article 44 of the Constitution, on the ground that "(a) common civil code will help the cause of national integration by removing disparate loyalties to laws which have conflicting ideologies." (from Veena Das, Critical Events: An Anthropological Perspective on Contemporary India. Oxford University Press, Delhi. 1995; pp 99) Das points out that there is no attempt to explain why such different loyalties in the sphere of personal life are necessarily threatening to the nation-state. Further, even though various tribal communities are also allowed similar personal law provisions, it is only Muslim personal law that is seen as generally threatening to national integration in India, even by the intellectual community.

³² This case raises significant questions about the cultural rights of communities vs. the rights of particular sections within the community such as women in this case, and more generally the rights of individuals in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. See Das (1995) for an excellent exposition of these issues. At issue also is how particularistic state ideologies often hegemonize differences in such polities. In some senses, this parallels the discussion in chapter three of how the cultural demands of the Muslim community in Britain bring up certain similar issues.

³³ L.K. Advani, Sunday Times of India, 14 October 1990. More recently, in a case brought by four Hindu wives whose husbands had remarried after converting to Islam, the Supreme court nullified the second marriages. In delivering this judgement that struck down the right assumed by Hindu husbands to practice polygamy by converting to Islam, the Supreme Court once again directed the government to work toward bringing about a uniform civil code. (See Manoj Mitta, "Striking Down a Right", in India Today, June 15, 1995: 54-55.) This was celebrated and seized upon by the BJP as a vindication of its position. See Manoj Mitta, "A Calculated Gambit", in India Today, July 31, 1995: 98-99.

has served the BJP agenda quite well. As shown in chapter seven, the BJP has used this as one of their strong examples of the “appeasement” of minorities and made the creation of a “uniform civil code” one its electoral planks.

Kashmir:

The importance of Kashmir lies in its symbolic place in the Indian imaginary as providing and validating the secular credentials of the Indian nation-state.³⁴ As the only Muslim majority state bordering Pakistan, Kashmir’s full and complete integration into the Indian state is almost seen as a ‘test’ of Indian secularism. Integration of Kashmir into Pakistan would seem to validate Jinnah’s³⁵ two-nation theory that Hindus and Muslims in the Indian subcontinent form two distinct and separate nations that necessitate separate political units. Kashmiri independence would also demonstrate the impossibility of Hindus and Muslims to live in the same political unit, thereby discrediting India’s claim to the ability to accommodate religious differences within a pluralist democratic polity. Not surprisingly, the ‘Kashmiri issue’ takes on a certain prominence in the Hindu Right discourse on the Indian nation.³⁶

³⁴ Unlike Punjab, Kashmir’s place in the Indian political-economy has never been particularly salient. In terms of resources assigned to it, and not just since the present disturbances, Kashmir has been quite ‘expensive’ on the Indian treasury. However, that Kashmir occupies a significant strategic position in the geo-politics of the Indian subcontinent is without dispute - an issue that has been demonstrated not only with respect to the India-Pakistan problem but also in the India-Pakistan-China equation as in the 1962 Indo-Chinese war, as well as in superpower balance of power politics during the cold war. See Raju G.C. Thomas (ed.), Perspectives on Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia. Westview Press, Boulder. 1992, for an excellent collection of different perspectives on the Kashmir issue. Recently, the resumption of overt military conflict between now nuclearized India and Pakistan in Kargil, Kashmir has once again brought the ‘Kashmir issue’ into national and international prominence.

³⁵ Leader of the Muslim league and considered to be the founding father of Pakistan.

³⁶ An India Today-ORG-MARG opinion poll in India showed that even though only 40% of the population believes that the ‘Kashmir problem’ will be solved (31% think that it won’t), as many as 71% of the people think that it is worth keeping Kashmir in India, while only 9% think that it isn’t. (See India Today-ORG-MARG Independence poll, in India Today, Aug 18, 1997)

As a princely state ruled by a Hindu ruler in a Muslim majority state, coupled with its geographical location between India and Pakistan, the three choices available to the ruler at the time of independence from British rule - merger with India, merger with Pakistan or political independence - were of interest and significance to both India and Pakistan. As it happened, the invasion by tribesmen from Pakistan, supported by the Pakistani army, led the Hindu ruler to accede to Indian rule, even though a substantial portion of Jammu was occupied by Pakistan in that 1948 war. This accession occurred on certain very specific terms, embodied in the now controversial Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, as elaborated on below. Further, a UN-sponsored plebiscite to allow the Kashmiri people to determine their fate, when the conditions of political normalcy made that possible, was agreed to by both India and Pakistan.

Like Punjab, the Kashmiri case also shows the strong interventionist policies of the central government led by the Congress, beginning under Jawaharlal Nehru's leadership and exacerbated under Indira Gandhi's and Rajiv Gandhi's governments, and leading to widespread corruption, various illegalities and excesses, and the general repression of legitimate political forces and resistance within the state. Some of these instances of the subversion of democracy in Kashmir are the illegal dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah's government in 1953 by Nehru followed by his arrest and imprisonment when he started defying his close alliance with the center and asserting his own position on the status of Kashmir; the active support of the G.M.Shah faction within the National Conference against Farooq Abdullah's faction and thus helping to dismantle the latter by Indira Gandhi; the appointment of authoritarian governors with strong loyalty to leaders

at the centre³⁷; the imposition of governor's and President's rule repeatedly; the widespread rigging of elections in the state, particularly the 1987 legislative assembly elections under Rajiv Gandhi; and most recently the excessive actions of state security forces, particularly the well documented violations of human rights and the unwillingness of the government to take any action against them. In general, the persistent refusal of the Indian government to hold a plebiscite and the sole emphasis of the central government to preserve its power at the expense of regional Kashmiri politics, supporting widespread corruption in the process has alienated most of the Kashmiri population. The general antipathy of Kashmiris to the Indian government and the increasing sympathy for political independence comes largely from this history. At the same time, the political instability and secessionist sentiments created by this situation provide the conditions for the BJP to articulate its particular stance on the Kashmiri issue with a renewed vigour.

Article 370 of the Constitution of India provides the state of Jammu and Kashmir with a degree of regional autonomy not enjoyed by most other states.³⁸ Article 370 prevents the central government from legislating on any issues beyond the three subjects of defense, external affairs and communications, without the concurrence of the state legislature and ratification by the state's Constituent Assembly. The center has repeatedly

³⁷ particularly Jagmohan, who had strong associations with Hindu militant groups even then, and is now a prominent leader in the BJP.

³⁸ There are other states that enjoy certain constitutionally guaranteed special provisions as well - Article 371 A for Nagaland, Article 371 F for Sikkim, Article 371 G for Mizoram and Article 371 H for Arunachal Pradesh. Further, Article 290-1 that allows the pledging of Rs. 50 Lakhs per annum for the maintenance of Hindu temples in Kerala and Tamil Nadu was validated through the 7th Amendment Act, 1956, thus overriding Article 27 that prohibits the dedication of public revenues for religious purposes. This as Baxi points out, was an attempt to honour the treaty of accession signed between the princely state of Travancore-Cochin and India. (See Upendra Baxi, "Secularism: Real and Pseudo", in Sandkhedher M.M. (ed.), Secularism in India: Dilemmas and Challenges. Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi. 1992) While Kashmir's special status emerges out of quite distinct circumstances, the non-politicization of these other cases, and the salience of the 'Kashmiri issue' is reflective to an extent of the Hindu-Muslim issue that structures the Hindu nationalist discourse.

violated this constitutional provision and undermined state authority unilaterally.³⁹
(Noorani, 1993)

Article 370 forms a significant part of the BJP campaign, and the BJP has been calling for an abrogation of Article 370 and the abolition of Kashmir's special status, on the grounds that Kashmir is an integral part of India and its full and complete integration into the Indian Union on the same basis as all other states should be constitutionally recognized.⁴⁰ At a basic level, the abrogation of Article 370 would be constitutionally invalid. But even more significantly, Article 370 emerged out of the negotiations between the leaders of the Indian Union (Nehru and his colleagues) and the representatives of Jammu and Kashmir (Sheikh Abdullah and his colleagues), and defined the very terms of accession of Kashmir with India. As pointed out by Noorani, rather than conferring a special status on the state of Jammu and Kashmir, article 370 recognizes the status that was negotiated in the terms of accession of the state to the Indian Union. Further, the provisional nature of even this accession, and the contested nature of Kashmiri status was embodied in the United Nations Resolution on the holding of plebiscite in India (a commitment that Nehru was reiterating publicly as late as November 1963, a year before his death).⁴¹ The BJP attempt to fix this contestation in one particular way clearly reflects a particular agenda.

³⁹ A.G. Noorani, "Article 370: Broken Pledges and Flawed Secularism", in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today. Viking, Penguin Books, New Delhi, India. 1993.

⁴⁰ Trying to emulate the 'success' of BJP leader L.K.Advani's 1991 *rath yatra* (chariot journey), the party organized another journey in 1992 called the *ekta yatra* (unity journey) from Kanyakumari at the southernmost part of India to Kashmir in the north. The attempt was to demonstrate the unity of the Indian nation, and in particular the full and complete integration of Kashmir into it, planned to end with the flying of the Indian flag at Srinagar, the capital of Jammu and Kashmir. The BJP entourage caused significant disturbances, particularly in Punjab and Kashmir, and the flag-planting ceremony by BJP leaders finally occurred only in the presence of state security forces.

⁴¹ See Noorani, 1993 for an excellent discussion of the constitutional and legal issues raised by Article 370.

Rajiv Gandhi's 'Hindu Card'

Concerned about the loss of large sections of traditional Congress(I) support groups, Rajiv Gandhi started appealing increasingly to Hindu voters. Starting his campaign for a second term in office in 1989 from Faizabad (a town neighbouring Ayodhya) with his famous “*Ram Rajya*” (the kingdom of Ram) speech, he attempted to appropriate the idiom of the Hindu Right in an effort to appeal to the Hindu middle classes.⁴² Making use of the politicization of the Babri Masjid/ Ram Janmabhoomi issue by the VHP and the BJP, he also indicated his support of the *Ramshila* program - the collection of ‘consecrated’ bricks from all over India for building a Hindu temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya - that had been organized by the VHP and that sparked off communal riots in several parts of India. In the by-election in Allahabad in 1988, the use of Arun Govil who had played Ram in the extremely popular Doordarshan (Indian television) version of *Ramayana* for electoral campaigning was a symbolic strategy that clearly drew on *Hindutva* cultural resources. In 1986, Rajiv Gandhi allowed the opening of the locks on the disputed Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi site in Ayodhya, maintained since 1949, in order to allow Hindus to worship inside, thus succumbing to controversial Hindu nationalist demands. In November 1989, he permitted the *Shilyanas* ceremony (laying the foundation stone) of the temple at the disputed site, primarily in light of the forthcoming elections. The tragic culmination of this process in the

⁴² Ayodhya in Northwestern India has been the disputed site of a Muslim mosque (the Babri Masjid) that is also claimed by some to be the historic birthplace of a Hindu mythological figure Rama (Rama Janmabhoomi). Even though this dispute has existed for several decades, it was only in the mid 1980s that the issue became highly politicized through the efforts of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, a militant Hindu nationalist affiliate of the BJP. (See Sarvepalli Gopal (ed.), Anatomy of a Confrontation: Ayodhya and the Rise of Communal Politics In India. Zed Books, London, 1993 for a collection of critical commentaries on this issue.)

destruction of the disputed structure by Hindu militants, followed by the widespread massacre of Muslims in many parts of the country, is now well known.

The exigencies of electoral politics (often called ‘vote-bank’ politics) led the ‘formally secular’ Congress governments under the leaderships of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi to resort to political strategies and mechanisms of governance which reproduced and exacerbated many of the divisions and antagonisms of colonial India. In the process, the Congress accentuated the communal character of the party, the state and politics, creating the ideological space for the emergence and success of the BJP. The ‘key moments’ highlighted here generated resources for the Hindu nationalist agenda, that as we will see in the next two chapters, were drawn on and used very effectively through BJP politics.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to lay out the background set of knowledges, meanings and practices that have enabled the emergence of Hindu nationalism in contemporary postcolonial India. The purpose was to interrogate the particular socio-historical conditions that served to construct the ‘taken-for-granted’ or the existing ‘common-sense’ on religious identities and interests in contemporary India. As this chapter tried to show, this common-sense was in many ways generated through the modernist practices and projects of colonialism and anti-colonialist struggles. Implicit in many such modernist projects were deep Orientalist prejudices that marked off Muslims as ‘others’. These discursive resources, as I will discuss in the next two chapters, would prove very useful in the articulations of contemporary Hindu nationalism.

But 'contemporary' Hindu nationalism itself emerged within the formally secular political framework established during several decades of post-independence Congress rule. Hence in order to understand how the BJP was able to step so aggressively into the political fray, this chapter also attempted to unsettle 'Congress secularism', and pointed to the 'religionization of politics' under successive Congress governments that created the ideological space for the emergence and success of contemporary Hindu nationalism.

The next two chapters examine the emergence and workings of contemporary Hindu nationalism, as reflected in the politics of the BJP. Continuing the argument of this chapter on the 'construction of common-sense', chapter seven will show how contemporary Hindu nationalism operates on the terrain of the existing common-sense and inflects and reconstructs it in particular ways. But before doing that, the next chapter will lay out the structural conditions in the Indian economy and politics that has made this reconstruction possible and viable.

Chapter Six

Liberalization and Democracy - The Discontents of the Middle-Class

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the historical construction of religious communities and identities, and the manner in which the categories of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' as separate and antagonistic came out of particular kinds of colonial and anti-colonial practices and discourses. I now begin to examine how the politics of contemporary Hindu nationalism works on this discursive terrain, and effects certain kinds of changes in Indian national identity. This chapter looks at the *structural conditions of possibility* for the emergence and success of Hindu nationalism, looking at the discontents of a very large and growing middle class in India that it taps into. The chapter traces out the larger structural changes of globalization and democratization in India, and the social, political and economic dislocations that have emerged out of them. In particular, I focus on two kinds of fundamental changes that have created a period of significant instability and flux in the Indian political formation in the last decade or so. The first part looks at what might be called the "maturing of Indian democracy" in the politicization of various marginal groups in contemporary Indian politics. This refers to the entrance of various organizations and parties representing lower caste and class interests into the political mainstream of Indian democracy. The second part looks at the recent changes in Indian political-economy that have resulted from the adoption of the new economic policies, programs and discourses that are generally classified under the rubric of "economic liberalization", and the corresponding integration of India into globalized systems of production and exchange. In both sections, I focus specifically on

how these changes have affected the existing status-quo and what kinds of responses have been generated from dominant caste-class interests. I also look at how the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the political mainstream face of Hindu nationalism speaks to those concerns and with what measure of success. Overall, the chapter argues that democratization and liberalization (a) create the structural conditions of possibility for the emergence and success of the BJP and (b) that the BJP makes use of these possibilities in ways that serve dominant caste-class interests. But, before I begin laying out the recent structural changes in the Indian economy and Indian politics that create the conditions of possibility for the rise of Hindu nationalism, let me start by drawing out some of the contours of the rise and success of Hindu nationalism in India.

The Rise of Hindu Nationalism

There is no doubt that a certain form of Hindu nationalism has been on the rise in the last couple of decades. The steady electoral success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) through the 1980s and 90s is often offered as evidence of the popularity and influence of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics. From an insignificant total of 2 seats in the 1984 parliamentary elections, the 1989 parliamentary elections in India saw it increase its strength to 88 members of parliament, which went up further to 119 in the 1991 elections, and still further to a total of 161 seats in the 1996 elections making it for the first time the party with the largest number of seats in parliament.¹ What are some of the facets of the BJP's success?

¹ It was on that basis that the BJP was the first party that was invited by the President to form a government after the 1996 elections. However, the party was unable to garner enough support to do so, which subsequently led the United Front to form a government with outside support from the Congress(I), with the BJP forming the largest opposition party in parliament. After the Congress(I) withdrew support and

Regionally, the BJP has been most successful in the Northern and Western parts of India. The 1989 elections saw the extension and consolidation of the BJP presence in Northern, Western and Central India. The 1991 elections showed further entrenchment in Western India and a dramatic entry into a part of Southern India (Karnataka). The 1996 elections did not show much more regional expansion, but a very strong consolidation in parts of the country where it had already made its presence felt in earlier elections. Large regions of the country, especially in the East and the South (except Karnataka) still remains largely outside BJP electoral influence. In the 1996 elections, the BJP won 74.5 per cent of its seats from what is called the Hindi heartland (including Bihar, but excluding Punjab), that is, it won 120 of its 161 seats from this region, and another 34 from Gujarat and Maharashtra, making a total of 95.7 per cent of its seats from this region, that is 154 of the 161 seats. It won only 7 (6 from Karnataka, 1 from Assam) seats or 3.7 per cent of its seats from the southern, eastern, and north-eastern parts of India.²

The principal and most stable base of Hindu nationalist parties and organizations has been the North Indian urban (and small-town), predominantly high-caste, lower middle class of professionals – shopkeepers, merchants, traders, petty bureaucrats, clerks, or more generally the petty bourgeoisie.³ More recently, this base has grown to include

brought down the United Front government, new elections were held in February and March 1998, which brought a BJP government (in alliance with some regional parties) into power. While my research concluded in December 1997, I would like to indicate here that the BJP improved its performance in the 1998 elections, gaining a total of 177 seats. More recently, the BJP government has fallen with the withdrawal of support of one of its alliance partners, and new elections are scheduled in a few months, which at this time the BJP is expected to win.

² See analysis of 1996 elections in India Today, May 31, 1996 and 1998 election predictions in India Today, December 15, 1997.

³ This is the class that formed the support base of Jan Sangh, the political party that was disbanded in 1984 to form the BJP. This is also the core support group for the RSS, a cultural-political, cadre-based organization that provides most of the personnel and much of the ideological inspiration for the BJP.

the economically successful, educated, upwardly mobile middle-class, largely upper-caste, urban groups, including a very large number of professionals and members of the bureaucratic class.⁴ The BJP has also been doing extremely well with the young and the new voters. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP – World Hindu Council) has helped the party establish links with a large number of religious leaders, who frequently take political stands in public addresses. The grassroots organizational network of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS -National Volunteers Organization) has been used to extend support to many rural areas, as well as among lower caste and tribal populations. Some of this work is starting to show in increasing electoral support in rural areas as well as among lower-caste and lower class groups, but the gains still remain small.

Overall it could be said that the BJP has become the most popular party among the upper-caste, middle-class, urban, Hindu voters in Northern and Western India. Starting from a relatively small percentage of overall votes in the 1984 elections (7%), the party reached a total of 20% (21% with allies) in the 1991 elections, a figure which remained the same (24% with allies) in the 1996 elections, even though it increased its total number of seats in parliament significantly in that election. Some commentators in the press have argued that this stagnation in the overall percentage of votes indicates that

⁴ In the 1996 elections, 45 per cent of BJP voters were upper-caste Hindus. (India Today, December 15, 1997) A large part of the support of the upper-caste, middle and upper-class population has, as I will point to below, clearly shifted from the Congress to the BJP.

the BJP has now reached the limit of its possible expansion⁵, while others predicted that the party will improve its overall performance even further in the 1998 elections.⁶

But the success of the BJP and of Hindu nationalism in general extends beyond its electoral performance. To focus exclusively on the electoral rise and fall of the BJP draws attention away from the widespread communalisation of everyday life reflected in a variety of ways. At one level, the increasing visibility of several Hindu nationalist organizations, many quite militant, and most associated with the BJP, in Indian politics and society (along with the significant rise in communal violence in the 1980s and 90s), is an indication of the changing general climate of opinion in the country. This includes the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Shiv Sena and the Bajrang Dal among others, often collectively called the *Sangh Parivar* (family of organizations)⁷. Even though there are some differences between the different organizations, and sometimes tensions between them and the BJP, it is important to recognize the very strong connections among them that gives them a measure of organic

⁵ See Ajit Kumar Jha, "Elections 1996: The Myth of the Hindutva Mandate", *Times of India*, May 18, 1996.

⁶ The party did improve its overall percentage of votes to 25% (36% with allies). (See "Results: How India Voted", in *India Today*, March 16, 1998. It might very well be that the BJP improved its electoral tally in the last elections that brought it to power simply on the grounds of 'stability', in light of the instability of the United Front government and the fickleness of Congress support to the government. To some voters the party was attractive simply because it remained a party untried in central government administration and perceived as relatively more disciplined and less corrupt than the other major parties. The test of this of course now remains to be seen in the next elections. But that does not in any way detract from the central issue that this dissertation is trying to address – that the BJP, as one among several faces of Hindu nationalism, has been successful in mainstreaming a hegemonic and problematic ideal of Indian national identity, and in doing so changing some of the agenda and terms of political debate in contemporary India.

⁷ Other important organizations associated with the Parivar are the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS – Indian Worker's Organization) - a large trade union federation which with a membership of 45 lakhs now claims a larger membership than the Congress(I) affiliated Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP – All India Student's Council) - a large nation-wide student's organization, whose importance lies in the fact that the younger population is the highest rising age cohort of support for the BJP, Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM – Economic Nationalism Consciousness-Raising Forum), organized to campaign for economic nationalist themes, the Dharma Sansad – an

unity. These connections make it possible for the BJP to project a more politically benign face, while organizations like the RSS and the VHP carry on aggressive mass campaigns on more controversial and overtly communal issues like cow slaughter, Ayodhya-like “liberation” of temples at Kashi and Mathura, etc.⁸ Important here also is the communalisation of several state institutions, such as the judiciary, the civil service, the police, the paramilitary forces and sections of the armed forces, as well as large parts of both print and broadcast media. For example, a series of Supreme Court judgements in cases that involved the prosecution of several elected representatives of the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra for corrupt practices under the Representation of the

organization of Sadhus (holy men) claiming a strength of about 30,000, and other tribal organizations, women's organizations, etc. The RSS has over 80 frontal organizations that deal with a variety of issues.

⁸ Most BJP leaders (as well as leaders from most of the other associated organizations) come from RSS backgrounds. In fact, there is an unwritten rule that only RSS *pracharaks* (leaders) can hold posts of BJP general secretaries. When dissensions within the BJP have threatened party discipline, the party has set up RSS style and RSS aided training camps (Prashikshan Sansthans) for all levels of party workers, including members of parliament, to undergo training in ideology. (See Saba Naqvi Bhaumik “Season for Change”, in *India Today*, October 20, 1997: 18-19 and Saba Naqvi Bhaumik “Training for Power”, in *India Today*, September 15, 1997: 26-27) Despite the differences that often surface between the BJP and the RSS, the influence of the RSS in serving as the “ideological conscience” of the party remains strong. (See N.K Singh “Hindu Divided Family” in *India Today*, December 15, 1996; 28-32) While the BJP leaders now restrain themselves from speaking publicly on some of the more politically controversial issues (and often even publicly disagree with statements made and positions taken by other organizations), restricting themselves to relatively banal public pronouncements like “anti-corruption” and “good governance”, the RSS and the VHP continue to stir up passions on religious and ‘cultural’ issues. (See N.K. Singh, “Return of the Hindu Card”, in *India Today*, October 15, 1995: 42-47). After forming the government recently, the BJP had been strategizing to use the grassroots links of the various affiliated organizations to extend its regional and social networking and building and consolidating its base. (See Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, “The Soul is the Sangh” in *India Today*, April 13, 1998.) My point is that while there are sometimes genuine differences of opinions and positions among these different organizations, as we will see on the issue of Swadeshi (economic nationalism) below, sometimes the differences also serve as a form of political strategy as the BJP relegates the Hindutva fervor to the VHP and RSS as it tries to project itself as more moderate. But more importantly, my argument is that there is a certain level of organic unity that in spite of the ambivalences gives the political formation that I call Hindu nationalism a certain coherence and logic. Hence even if the electoral success of the BJP can be attributed to a number of different voter/agent interests and motivations (A June 1996 India Today-MARG post-election survey revealed that only 33 % of the people agreed with the statement that the BJP is a communal party, whereas 56% felt it was not; see *India Today*, June 30, 1996), there are both larger structural causes and in particular, consequences of its rise to power. This is also the reason that simply focussing on the “liberal” face of the current (interim) BJP prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee as evidence of the political mainstreaming of Hindu nationalism is inadequate. (See for instance Jonathan Karp, “Sheep Among Wolves” in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, May 30, 1996. See N.K. Singh, “Operating Oh So Smoothly” in *India Today*, May 15, 1996 for instances of how Vajpayee’s liberalism has had to be reigned in due to party and other pressures.)

People Act (which prohibits the use of religion for electoral practices) brought forth a very controversial message from the Court. Not only was the Court quite noticeably soft in its judgements on the accused, but also stated (almost echoing some of the BJP's positions) that Hindutva and Hinduism constituted "a way of life" of the people of the Indian subcontinent, reflecting "Indianisation", and hence its deployment in a political campaign did not necessarily have religious connotations.⁹ Hindu nationalists lauded the decision, and celebrated the judgement as the removal of legal hindrances to the propagation of Hindutva.¹⁰ The indifference of the state apparatus to prevent the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, and the involvement of the Bombay police in the January 1993 riots against Muslims are also instances that reflect this communalisation of state institutions. The communalisation of the print media is reflected both in the massive growth of the communal press, reflected for instance in the huge circulations of Samna and Marmick, the dailies of the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra (regional electoral ally of the BJP) as well as in the growing 'hinduisation' of prominent Hindi newspapers in Northern India such as Navbharat Times and Jansatta as well as elite national English dailies such as The Times of India and The Indian Express.¹¹

⁹ See N.K. Singh, "Hindutva: Back on the Agenda" in India Today, Jan 15, 1996: 22-24 and Manoj Mitta and Arun Subramaniam, "Redefining Communal Politics" in India Today, Jan 15, 1996: 24-27

¹⁰ See Supreme Court on "Hindutva" & "Hinduism" and L.K. Advani's Statement, BJP Publication No. E/19/95, New Delhi, 1995 and "Hindu Religion a 'Way of Life': Supreme Court" in BJP Today, Jan 1-15, 1996: 16-21. See Brenda Cossman and Ratna Kapur, "Secularism: Bench-Marked by Hindu Right" in Economic and Political Weekly, Sept 21, 1996: 2613-2630 for a discussion of how the Supreme Court decision fails to take into account the historical and political context within which the concept of Hindutva has acquired meaning and in doing so has vindicated the anti-secular and anti-minority views of the Hindu right. See Anil Nauriya "The Hindutva Signals: A Warning Signal" in Economic and Political Weekly, Jan 6, 1996: 10-13 for a discussion of how the Supreme Court decision reflects a growing tendency by state institutions toward an acceptance of the Hindu right conceptual framework.

¹¹ See Charu Gupta and Mukul Sharma, "Communal Constructions: media reality vs real reality" in Race and Class, 38, 1, 1996: 1-20 for an excellent discussion of the communalisation of the Indian print media. The BJP, as the authors point out, are well aware of this and use the media quite effectively through the circulation of an abundance of 'press releases' that journalists reproduce uncritically as 'news'. See Arvind Rajagopal, "Ram Janmabhoomi Consumer Identity and Image-based Politics," in Economic and Political

At another level, the BJP and these other organizations have remarkably changed the political idiom and discourse of Indian politics, reflected not only in the kinds of issues and forms of political debate, but also in popular culture and everyday language. On various issues like Ayodhya, Uniform Civil Code, Article 370 in Kashmir, etc., as discussed in the previous chapter, the BJP has established the parameters of political discourse that sets the ideological agenda of other political parties. I had earlier discussed the communalisation of politics under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi's governments. The increasing success of the BJP has imparted a much more distinctly Hindu face to the Congress more recently. This is reflected for instance in Narasimha Rao's (the Congress leader who had succeeded Rajiv Gandhi as prime minister) silence on his earlier promise to rebuild the demolished Babri Mosque at Ayodhya, instead making BJP-like promises of building a Ram temple at the site, bringing in his own set of Sadhus.¹²

Hence, aside from the BJP's rising electoral successes, there is an ongoing significant reorientation of shared social meanings about what it means to be 'Indian' structured around a Hindu/Muslim axis that needs to be explored. To reiterate once more, the rise and presence of Hindu nationalism in Indian politics cannot be attributed

Weekly, July 2, 1994 for an analysis of the spread of Hindu images via the message of consumption through the electronic mass media, particularly television. The BJP has also been extremely innovative in its own use of visual technology to spread its message, as in the 'video *raths* (chariots)' that are basically trucks carrying a television and VCR that are very effective in carrying its message, especially to non-literate populations in rural areas.

¹² See Yubaraj Ghimre and Zafar Agha, "The Tables Turn Again" in India Today, Sept 30, 1994: 44-47 and Zafar Agha, "Battle for the South" in India Today, Nov 15, 1994: 20-21. This encroachment of the Congress on the Hindutva turf has not been lost on the BJP. BJP leaders recognize the legitimacy granted to the Ayodhya issue by the Congress endorsement of building a temple, and believe that this only strengthens their position. "So far as the Ayodhya movement is concerned," Advani says, "it is gratifying to find that in 1993-94 even the opponents of the Ayodhya movement acknowledge that construction of a Ram Temple at the Ram Janam Bhoomi has become inevitable. No one talks any more about reconstructing the "Babri Masjid"." (L.K. Advani's Presidential Speech delivered to the BJP National Council Session, 10-12 June, 1994 held at Vadodra, Gujarat, as reproduced in "Basis of our Nationalism is our Culture and Heritage" in BJP Today, June 16-30, 1994; pp 8) As stated by one senior BJP leader, "We see the temple issue as one in which the BJP can only end up a winner. As long as they don't build it, we have the temple

solely to the BJP and its associated organizations. This is a process that has been significantly affected by the communalisation of the Indian state and of Indian politics under the so-called secular Congress governments of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. As I argued in the previous chapter, it is partially the failure of secularist politics under Congress leadership that has created the space that the BJP, and Hindu nationalism more generally, has come to occupy and seize upon very effectively. Recognizing the significance of this, one BJP leader said, “(w)hile the Kesri Congress is on the decline, its saffron clone is on the rise.”¹³ But the occupancy of this space by the BJP has affected further and significantly the discourse of contemporary Indian politics and culture. I argue that the rise of the BJP is helping effect a subtle, but consequential ideological shift in Indian national identity.

The Structural Conditions of Possibility for the Emergence of Hindu Nationalism

To understand the emergence of Hindu nationalism in the contemporary period, one needs to situate it within the present conjuncture of social forces. Here I look at two significant changes in Indian politics that have created certain discontents within a very large Indian middle class that Hindu nationalists can and have spoken to quite effectively. On the one hand are the liberalization programs adopted quite enthusiastically by the Indian state, and the social, cultural, economic and political consequences that have resulted from India’s increasing integration into a globalized economy and communication network. This of course has required the replacement of a huge, well-developed, statist developmentalist apparatus, and a worldview that articulated the

plank. And the moment they build it, it would be poof that our ideals were always right.” (from Yubaraj Ghimre and Zafar Agha, “The Tables Turn Again” in *India Today*, Sept 30, 1994; pp 47)

existence of that apparatus with India's post-colonial economic nationalist theme of 'self-reliance'. On the other hand, the increased visibility of previously marginalized social groups within the political sphere, as an organized electoral challenge to existing alliances of dominant groups in the governance of the country has introduced a certain amount of flux and instability in the political climate since the mid 1980s. This is represented most strongly in the 'politics of caste' as demonstrated in the controversial Mandal Commission issue discussed below. It is this latter set of changes that I look at first.

Part I: The Changing Face of Indian Politics

For most of post-independence Indian history, the Congress has been the ruling party in power, and even though it faced political opposition to different degrees at different times at the level of the states, it has enjoyed relative security at the national level for the most part. In general, Congress, led mostly by middle-class and upper-caste leaders, had the widespread electoral support not just of the dominant upper and middle classes, but of minorities and lower economic classes as well. The stability of Congress rule in the earlier period was partially ensured through institutional and patronage networks that the leadership at the center had established with local-level leaders across the country, so that social, cultural and political hierarchies were reproduced quite effectively through a Congress rule with a substantial degree of popular support. In the later phase of Indira Gandhi's rule, this system started dissolving, as the centralization of power was combined through populist politics that overrode local levels of authority in

¹³ As quoted in "Alliances and Compromises", in India Today, Dec 29, 1997.

appealing directly to the people.¹⁴ While destabilizing the system, this had the effect of the politicization of social groups and social claims that had been previously marginalized through the existing networks of political authority, and eventually resulted in effective challenges to Congress power from at least two different quarters. On the one hand, various organizations and parties that spoke more directly to the concerns of lower classes, castes and other marginal groups became increasingly prominent, coalescing in the United Front government of Deve Gowda, subsequently led by I.K. Gujral, that held the reins of governmental power till the early elections in March 1998 brought the BJP to power. On the other hand, the rise and the success of the BJP, reflecting the interests of the urban, middle classes and upper castes, is a response both to the perceived inability of the Congress to address the concerns of the dominant groups, and the political challenges mounted from the left in the emergence of the United Front as an avowed representative of the marginal groups.

Now, whether or not the United Front does represent the interests of the dominated classes, or how effectively it does that, is a question that I will not address here. As far as economic reform issues are concerned, the United Front has certainly not been hostile to liberalization, and the United Front government had not made any attempts to roll back liberalization; nor had it made any concerted attempts to address the socially and economically disruptive effects of liberalization on lower economic classes.¹⁵

It has been argued that Deve Gowda (the first prime minister in the left-of-center United

¹⁴ See Paul R. Brass, The Politics of India since Independence, Cambridge University Press, New York. 1994; Ayesha Jalal, Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995; Atul Kohli, The State and Poverty in India. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 1987; Rajni Kothari, State Against Democracy: In Search of Humane Governance. Ajanta Publication, Delhi. 1988.

¹⁵ I will address the issue of the ambivalent and contradictory stand of the BJP on the issue of economic reforms later in the paper.

Front government that came to power after the 1996 elections) himself represents the class interests of a newly emergent powerful fraction of the Indian big bourgeoisie - the agro-based capitalists.¹⁶ But what is important here is that this coalition of political forces is *perceived* to be the organized political voice of these dominated and marginal classes, and its politicization of certain issues pertinent to these classes, represented most effectively in the Mandal Commission reports, has certainly released certain anxieties amongst the middle classes. The rising success of the BJP, even as it attempts to broaden its own base through appeals to the lower classes and castes, needs to be situated within this political climate, and understood partially as a response to those anxieties.

Communalism, as Lieten points out, “is not the reflection of underlying ethnic structures but is generated within a competitive socio-economic context as the instrument of political intervention aimed towards vertical multi-class solidarity as a safe substitute for horizontal class solidarities, i.e., to substitute continuing upper class dominance for emerging lower class consciousness and organization”.¹⁷ Exploring the manner in which contemporary Indian politics has brought caste differences much more to the center of political debate, I will argue that *the “Muslim threat” becomes the ideological glue through which Hindu nationalism attempts to suture a fractured Hindu identity*. It becomes one of the sites through which the BJP attempts to address the threat to dominant Hindu caste/class interests in the face of the widespread politicization of subordinate caste/class interests.

¹⁶ Ahmad Aijaz, “In the Eye of the Storm: The Left Chooses”, in Economic and Political Weekly, June 1. 1996: 1329-1343

¹⁷ Lieten G.K., “Hindu Communalism: Between Caste and Class”, in Journal of Contemporary Asia, Vol. 26, No.2. 1996: 239.

Nationalism and Caste

How does the pan-Hindu ideology of contemporary Hindu nationalism fit into the complicated caste-class configuration of post-colonial India? To understand the effectiveness of the BJP appeal amongst the middle-class, upper-caste Indian population, one needs to understand the politicization of caste issues and the resultant threat and insecurity generated in the dominant classes. The caste question has always had an uneasy relationship with questions of Indian nationalism, even prior to Indian independence, and some of this uneasiness reflects itself in the Hindu nationalist position with respect to caste. The mass mobilization campaign of Gandhi in the anticolonial struggle involved both the participation of large numbers of lower castes and dalits¹⁸, and brought issues of caste discrimination and the possibility/desirability of ending untouchability more centrally into the political discussion in the nationalist sphere. This, as Sumit Sarkar points out, did not pose any logical difficulty either for the bourgeois-liberal or socialist views on social egalitarianism; or for leftist forces that saw caste as a feudal and regressive relic. However, caste oppression was often a social reform issue that was sidetracked in favor of what were seen as the more pressing and immediate issues of political independence and class struggle.¹⁹ Further, the bulk of the leadership of the nationalist movements and even leftist movements came from Hindu upper-caste backgrounds. To an extent, attempts to address issues of caste also came from such Hindu upper-caste perspectives. Despite his work amongst the lower castes, Gandhi's defense of the *varnashrama dharma* (the caste system) has always made Gandhi's

¹⁸ Dalit is the term of preference used by marginal 'untouchable', other lower-caste groups and some other oppressed groups. I will use this term through the chapter to refer to these groups.

Brahmanic Hinduism suspect among lower castes. Untouchable leader Ambedkar's resistance to what he saw as Gandhi's attempt to incorporate the 'untouchables' within the Hindu fold continues to inform the Dalit movements and parties in contemporary India.²⁰ Other dalit leaders such as Phule and Periyar also resisted the imposition of the category 'Hindu' to describe many middle and lower classes.²¹

The Hindu reformist attempts to alleviate caste discrimination, as in Brahmo Samaj initiatives of encouraging intercaste marriages within communities, and the Arya Samaj *Shuddhi* (purification) rituals, were limited, largely ineffective, and often pragmatic responses to periods of lower caste pressures.²² In the state of Maharashtra, where Hindu nationalism has had a particularly virulent face in the politics of Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena, Sarkar points out how "the crystallization of the ideology and organization of Hindutva in the mid-1920s, despite the relatively weak presence in that region of the supposed Muslim threat, which was its overt justification" arose in the context of lower caste and Dalit movements organized under strong and vocal leaders

¹⁹ Sarkar Sumit, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva", in David Ludden (ed.) Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. 1996: 276.

²⁰ Both Gandhi and Ambedkar's names continue to stir much controversy in discussions of caste issues. Dalit leader Mayawati's criticism of Gandhi has been used by Hindu nationalists as a means to discredit her credentials as a political leader. Hindu nationalists have also been divided considerably over the question of how much significance to accord Ambedkar, with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra opposed to the issue, while other sections within the movement have attempted to appropriate the symbolic mileage generated by the invocation of Ambedkar's figure within the lower caste groups. I will bring up this issue again when I turn to the BJP's position on caste issues.

²¹ See Gail Omvedt, "Hinduism, Social Inequality, and the State", in Allen Douglas (ed.), Religion and Political Conflict in South Asia: India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Greenwood Press, Westport, CT. 1992; and Upendra Baxi, "Emancipation as Justice: Babasaheb Ambedkar's Legacy and Vision", Upendra Baxi and Bhikhu Parekh (ed.), Crisis and Change in Contemporary India. Sage Publications, New Delhi. 1995.

²² Sumit Sarkar, "Indian Nationalism and the Politics of Hindutva", in David Ludden (ed.) Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community, and the Politics of Democracy in India. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. 1996: 271

such as Ambedkar and Phule.²³ The RSS also arose in Maharashtra out of a Brahmin response to an anti-Brahmin movement.²⁴ This was an instance then of how the specter of the “Muslim threat” served to consolidate Hindu identity in the face of divisions within the “Hindu community”, in particular divisions that threatened the interests of dominant caste-class groups.

Caste and Class in Post-Colonial Indian Politics

The peculiarities of post-colonial Indian politics has complicated significantly the caste-class configuration across the country. In order to understand the present situation, one needs to look at how central and regional politics has led to the creation and reproduction of different caste-blocs with differential access to state patronage and benefits. Without going into the process through which these categories were created and consolidated, let me lay out the basic structure that defines the contemporary politics of caste and class in India.²⁵ The categories of caste and class in India are cross-cutting and overlapping in many different ways, and vary significantly across the country. I will attempt to explain some of the more general and broad ways that these categories intersect and create different political interests in different situations.

In general there are three broad political/official categories of caste-groups – (1) the ‘scheduled castes’ (or the ‘untouchable’ or Dalit groups), (2) the ‘forward castes’ (consisting of upper caste groups of Brahmins, Rajputs, Kayasthas, Khattris, etc.) and (3)

²³ ibid: 288.

²⁴ Ahmad points to the emergence of the RSS in the 1920s as a response also to the first attempts at organized working class movements in that period. (Aijaz Ahmad, “In the Eye of the Storm: The Left Chooses”, in Economic and Political Weekly, June 1. 1996: 1335)

²⁵ For a discussion of these issues see Richard Fox, Gandhian Utopia: Experiments with Culture. Beacon Press, Boston, 1989.

'the backward castes' (or what in official parlance has come to be called 'other backward classes' or OBCs consisting of a very large, socially and economically diverse collection of intermediate caste groups). The forward caste category includes at least three different groups (a) the traditionally powerful (both economically and socially), upper-caste rural landowning castes, (b) the upper-caste urban upper and upper-middle class groups that have historically had higher access to educational and administrative resources (and form the English-educated, upwardly mobile, professional, bureaucrat and big business urban classes) and (c) a somewhat lower-caste ('*vaishyas*') urban group of lower-middle class merchants, moneylenders, shopkeepers and small business owners (or the 'petty bourgeoisie') in big and small cities.²⁶ The forward castes, and in particular category b of that group, has provided most of the political and administrative leadership in the first few decades of post-independence Indian politics, and in general dominates the more active forms of mainstream political participation. The 'scheduled castes' (along with the 'scheduled tribes') or Dalit group was officially recognized in post-independence India as a disadvantaged group that needed public assistance, and an elaborate system of 'reservations' (or affirmative action programs) was created for that reason.²⁷ Partially as a result of this reservations system, this group now includes a substantial middle class and has also created a set of strong vocal leaders. The politicization of this group is reflected

²⁶ This last group (called the 'bania' class) has formed the longest and most stable base of Hindu nationalist parties, especially in Northern and Western India. The former two groups had traditionally been Congress supporters till relatively recently, but these are the two groups, and especially the second, within which the BJP has now managed to enlarge its support base significantly.

²⁷ The 'scheduled caste' or Dalit groups have also, and somewhat ironically along with upper-caste groups, traditionally supported the Congress, partly because of the elaborate patronage system worked out through the reservations system for Scheduled Castes and Tribes in post-independence India, and the anti-poverty programs aimed in particular at these groups in Indira Gandhi's populist measures. Muslims have also traditionally been supporters of the 'secular' Congress, but this support base of the Congress has also been eroding as the secularism of the Congress has become increasingly suspect. In particular after the Babri

most prominently within the political mainstream in the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) that draws its political support primarily from this group.

However, it is the third category of OBCs that reflects most significantly the changing caste-class configurations of post-colonial Indian politics in the rising economic, social and political clout of a very diverse group of middle and lower caste groups that benefited from some of the reforms and redistributive measures of the post-independence government, especially in the rural areas. Agrarian reforms such as the abolition of the Zamindari system and absentee landlordism enabled the 'protected' and 'permanent' tenants to extend their land holdings and gradually compete for economic resources and political power with the traditional landholding (usually forward caste) groups, thus leading to the growth of a politically influential middle peasantry. In Southern Indian states like Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, with a longer history of political activism against upper-caste domination (anti-Brahmin movements), the backward caste groups have been the dominant land-owning groups for a significant period, and the competition now is primarily *between* backward caste groups for a larger share of patronage and resources. But this rise of OBC power is a relatively more recent phenomenon in Western, and even more in Northern India, where previous attempts to build backward-caste coalitions had faced fierce resistance, but is now reflected in the rising influence of the relatively more affluent Yadavs, Kurmis, Koeris, Jats, Ahirs, Patidars etc.²⁸ Contemporary Indian politics shows the rise of various organizations and

Masjid demolition in 1991, Muslim support has shifted quite dramatically from the Congress toward one of the political formations on the left that claim to represent the interests of marginal groups.

²⁸ See Sumantra Bose, "'Hindu Nationalism' and the Crisis of the Indian State" in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (ed.), Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997 for an excellent discussion of these issues. The increasing clout of the Yadavs in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is now often called the 'Yadavisation' of politics in these states. Some of the parties representing

parties representing these groups and their increased political influence in more recent elections.

The politicization of marginal groups is reflected in the composition now not just of local and state governments, but also at the national level in the 11th Lok Sabha that was formed in 1996 comprising 28 different parties. The Backward caste groups (excluding Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe groups) had increased their representation from 10.2 per cent in 1952 to 23.3 per cent in 1996, even though forward caste groups had retained the same proportion of parliamentary seats (45.5 per cent in 1952 and 45.6 per cent in 1996, with some fluctuations in between).²⁹ The rise of the Backward caste groups is not restricted to the Hindi belt, but also includes several Southern states, and includes a large number of highly vocal and articulate leaders from these groups.³⁰

How much of a threat to the status-quo does this changing configuration of caste-class relations pose? How do different parties, especially the BJP, respond to those threats? I use one particular and significant recent instance from Indian politics to

the interests of the OBCs are the Samajwadi Party (SP) in U.P., the Samata Party in Bihar, and the Janata Dal (in its various guises) in several states, etc.

²⁹ Harendar Baweja, "Changing Face of Parliament", in *India Today*, July 15, 1996. This change partly reflects the slowly rising strength of rural interests as evidenced in the 52 per cent presence of agriculturists in parliament (up from 22.5 per cent in 1952), many of whom are from backward caste groups, mostly landed castes with the economic resources to enter the political mainstream. (*ibid*) Muslims account for less than 5 per cent of the 1996 parliament. ("Different Strokes" in *India Today*, July 15, 1996)

³⁰ An ICSSR-CSDS-India Today poll shows that opposition to the democratic system is weaker among the deprived and marginal groups, and much stronger among the privileged urban, educated, upper caste, rich, male groups (or what the survey calls the exclusive HUM group – Hindu Upper Caste Males) The poll shows that popular participation in politics, especially at the local and regional levels, was much higher in 1996 than 1971. Along with the increase in membership of political parties, also evident is the increase in membership of caste/religious organizations. Evidence also shows that turnout in elections is higher than the national average among the disadvantaged categories of 'Very Poor', 'Dalit', as well as 'Rural' groups. Muslims voters voted below the national average, as did upper caste, urban and educated voters. See *India Today*, August 31, 1996.

highlight the kinds of anxieties and issues generated from these changes in Indian politics.

The Mandal Issue

The decision by the V.P. Singh government to implement the Mandal Commission recommendations greatly enhanced the appeal of Hindutva among the upper-caste and middle class groups. The government-sponsored Mandal Commission report that was submitted in 1980 recommended that 27 per cent of central government jobs and government-supported higher educational seats be reserved for the 52% of Hindus that were classified as OBCs, thus extending reservations from those assigned for Scheduled Castes (15 per cent) and Scheduled Tribes (7.5 per cent), and bringing the figure close to 50 per cent.³¹ The decision to implement the recommendations in August 1990 generated significant and quite violent protests in urban North India by upper-caste students from the middle and lower-middle classes, that included some dramatic headline-grabbing self-immolations. Without raising the complicated issue of the merits of the Mandal Commission report which generated an intense debate about reservations policy among Indian scholars, it is important to point out here that this was read within Hindu nationalist ranks as an issue not so much of distributive justice, but one divisive of a pre-given Hindu community.

The staging of the Ayodhya issue with Advani's *Rath Yatra* (chariot pilgrimage) in September-October of 1990, and its sudden prominence after several years of attention to it by the VHP in particular, has to be understood within this context. BJP leader L.K.

Advani led a procession through western, central and northern India to generate support for the Ayodhya issue, that was forcibly thwarted in Uttar Pradesh by then Janata Dal chief minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, leading subsequently to the dismissal of the V.P. Singh government as the BJP withdrew its support for it. The violence of communal riots and the issue of 'Hindu pride' generated in the wake of the procession deflected attention away from the lower-caste and class interests so that legislation on reservations was deferred. The BJP became the voice of an alienated middle class that saw itself as seriously disadvantaged through the economic policies of the state.³² The Mandal issue ended up sharply polarizing caste allegiances in Northern India, with the upper castes shifting their support to the BJP and the OBCs supporting the Janata Dal. The upper caste middle class urban electorate in North India, especially in Uttar Pradesh, dissatisfied with Congress equivocation on the reservations issue found the BJP's strong and vocal position on an indivisible, organic Hindu identity very appealing and shifted their electoral support from the former to the latter. The OBC support of the Janata Dal and its favorable position on reservations was further consolidated after the Mandal issue. The Dalit vote, as I will show below, became the battleground for all parties.

The Mandal issue is a contemporary instance of the way in which the Muslim threat provided the discursive resources to generate a powerful consensus in favor of Hindutva among the upper castes-middle classes whose interests were most threatened by

³¹ Sumantra Bose points out that the practical impact of this measure would have minor impact, with only about 40,000 jobs being affected annually in a country where the number of potential entrants to the labor market is in the millions. (Bose, 1997)

³² An ICSSR-CSDS-India Today poll conducted in 1996 showed that 71% of the population answered yes to the question of whether there should be reservation in government jobs for OBCs, while 16% answered no. A caste breakdown shows that 56% upper caste groups, 84% of Dalit groups and 77% of OBC groups agreed with the need for reservations for OBCs. A recently conducted opinion poll by India Today-ORG-MARG found that only 35% of the population found the government's reservations policy based on caste to

the reservations policy. When asked in an interview about caste polarisation arising from an alliance between the SP and the BSP in Uttar Pradesh, Advani answered that he believed that “the Ayodhya agitation most successfully sublimated caste tensions.”³³ “While Mandal had divided the people,” pointed out BJP leader K.R. Malkani, “Ayodhya united the people.”³⁴ The close juxtaposition of Mandal and Ayodhya led to its labeling in the press as the “Mandal-Mandir” (Mandir means temple) controversy. The “Muslim threat” served as the ‘other’ through which the BJP was able to articulate a hegemonic ‘Hindu self’ that drew in dominant caste-class interests.³⁵

Contradictions in Caste-Class Alignments

It is important to point out here that the politicization of different marginal caste-class interests has not meant either any necessary symmetry of interests between these different groups, nor their easy articulation into a political alliance against dominant upper-caste and class interests. Where alliances have been created, these have remained both contingent and problematic. Conflicts between the more affluent Backward Caste groups and the poorer Dalit groups abound, both in the form of clashes in everyday life and in local and regional politics. In terms of everyday life, Dalit and middle caste

be justified, while 53% thought it was unjustified. 75% of Brahmins and 30% of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes thought it was justified. See India Today, August 18, 1997.

³³ Interview with L.K. Advani in Swapan Dasgupta and Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, “Advantage BJP”, India Today, Nov 3, 1997; pp 19. There have been a number of subsequent attempts by the BJP to imitate the success of Advani’s Rath Yatra on the Mandir issue in galvanizing the Hindu vote. But none of the other Yatras, organized on a variety of themes, have had the same effect.

³⁴ K.R. Malkani, “The Birth, Growth and Unstoppable March of BJP” in BJP Today, Nov 16-Dec 15, 1995; pp 42.

³⁵ Similar attempts made in the late 1970s and mid 1980s in U.P., Bihar and Gujarat to introduce OBC reservations at the state level had also generated large scale caste and religious riots. In 1985, Gujarat saw the break out of large scale anti-reservations riots in which upper-caste wrath, with police complicity, came to be directed against the Muslim minority in the state, and also ended up consolidating the upper caste vote behind the BJP. (See Bose, 1997)

groups have often had more direct, and more serious conflicts, over issues such as land rights, and access to resources in the rural areas. There is no necessary logic as to how caste loyalties translate into caste or class alliances. Rather, inter-caste and class solidarities are always the result of political labor. Let me use the example of the state of Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) that presents in a very interesting fashion the contradictions that arise from these fractures in caste-class configurations, and the difficulties in constructing caste alliances.

In many ways Uttar Pradesh, which sends the highest number of representatives to parliament, remains the center of this new Dalit assertiveness, even as the BSP (the Dalit party) is attempting to make inroads elsewhere across the country. U.P. politics shows quite clearly the contradictions that arise in attempting to construct caste-class alliances with any degree of consistency of interests. Attempts to form Dalit-OBC alliances as resistance to forward-caste interests have been hampered by the history of social and economic conflicts between the two groups, as well as among fractions within the two groups. Disputes over land rights, over social rules and conventions, over access to state resources, as well as in the economic gaps between the two groups often intervene to fragment the common political interests constructed through alliances. BSP leader Kanshi Ram has been a strong opponent of OBC dominance represented by Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party (SP). The BSP-SP tie-up in 1993 to check the BJP's rise to power in post-Ayodhya UP, broke up within 18 months due to conflicts between the two parties. BSP leader Mayawati's diatribes against Mahatma Gandhi has often angered many OBCs, that like much of middle-class India sees Gandhi as the "father of the nation". These contradictions of U.P. electoral politics have also played out in bringing together the BSP and the BJP, representing what would seem to be conflicting

interests, into alliances on a number of occasions³⁶. In U.P., the 32 per cent upper caste electorate has meant that the BSP (and the SP as well) have had to court the very groups that they have often publicly made strong, negative remarks against³⁷, just as the BJP has had to court OBCs and Dalits often at the risk of alienating the core support groups in the respective parties. In other words, rather than assuming any necessary and automatic alignment of caste and class interests, one needs to investigate the particular socio-historical contexts and the manner in which political alignments are constructed. I now turn to look at how the BJP steps into this fray of changing caste-class relations.

The BJP and Caste

How has the BJP itself dealt with this growing assertiveness against upper-caste dominance? As I pointed out in the last section, the BJP has had to enter into alliances with the Dalit party, the BSP, several times in Uttar Pradesh politics. Alliances with the BSP has caused considerable dissension within the ranks of the party as well as among its upper-caste support groups. But the BJP has come to recognize the impossibility of ignoring the growing power of these lower and middle caste-class groups. While it still remains ambivalent with respect to OBC power despite its occasional attempts to accommodate it³⁸, it has felt it absolutely imperative to actively seek out Dalit support.

³⁶ The BSP's political tie-ups with diverse parties, regardless of ideological/political orientation, has earned it the reputation of being "unlike the Dalit movements of the past...that combined involvement in competitive politics with social activism" and being interested simply in "the relentless pursuit of political power, using short cuts wherever necessary." (Farzand Ahmed, Saba Naqvi Bhaumik and Subhas Mishra, "Doublespeak Duo" in *India Today*, September 22, 1997: 14)

³⁷ diatribes against the "Brahmin-Bania network" that has oppressed Dalits, and the Manuvadi system that has propagated the caste-system and upper-caste dominance, are common from BSP leaders such as Kanshi Ram and Mayawati.

³⁸ For instance, during the distribution of tickets for assembly and Lok Sabha elections in UP, there has always been conflict between OBC BJP leader Kalyan Singh who has sought more tickets for OBC

Recognizing the electoral (and ideological) perils of its upper-caste image, it has felt it necessary to project the image of an organic and unified Hindu society in order to, in the words of BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi “fix the post-Mandal fractured polity of India”.³⁹ What better way to do that than by recognizing the oppression and marginalisation of the lowest castes and classes within Hindu society – the Dalit group categorized as Scheduled Castes (and Tribes), the “Untouchables” of Hindu society, the “Harijans” (god’s children) in Mahatma Gandhi’s words? This helps the BJP to both critique other parties as “casteist”, as trying to divide Hindu society, and also portray itself as a champion of the truly oppressed in society. It also of course helps to fragment the possibility of lower and middle caste solidarity against upper caste dominance.

The BJP has been seeking out Dalit support through various programs as well as symbolic gestures. The BJP has also started a number of social welfare programs aimed particularly at Dalits. The figure of Dalit leader Ambedkar, that has a strong symbolic resonance in Dalit movements, has now been appropriated by the BJP and the Sangh Parivar more generally. Ambedkar is now celebrated as a hero for the Sangh Parivar, sharing pride of place with other more conventional Sangh heroes such as RSS founder, K.B. Hedgewar, Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and Deendayal Upadhyaya, and has also been called “a saviour of Hindu society”.⁴⁰ The Sangh Parivar has also made some other very visible symbolic gestures to demonstrate its inclusiveness of lower castes within its

candidates and upper caste BJP leaders Kalraj Mishra and Lalji Tandon. But the BJP has also, like all other parties, been increasing its share of OBC members in parliament.

³⁹ From Farzand Ahmed, Saba Naqvi Bhaumik and Subhas Mishra, “Doublespeak Duo” in *India Today*, September 22, 1997: 14.

⁴⁰ Yubaraj Ghimre, “Ram is Still Best” in *India Today*, December 31, 1993: 23. See also M. Rahman and Zafar Agha, “Dalits: A New Assertiveness” in *India Today*, April 30, 1994. This of course has not been without its own conflicts within Hindu nationalist ranks. The decision by the BJP to support the renaming of Marathwada University after Ambedkar has been opposed by the Shiv Sena that is the coalition-partner of the BJP in the Maharashtra government.

forum. During the *Ram Shila Pujan* (the carrying of consecrated bricks from villages in India to Ayodhya for the building of the temple) the processions were carried through all parts of the villages, including the Harijan parts, where traditional religious processions have never gone. A highly visible gesture was a Harijan performing the *Shilanyas* (laying of the foundation stone) of the temple. In the summer of 1993, Mahant A vaidyanath, a VHP leader and BJP legislator, supported the installation of a Harijan priest in a Patna temple.⁴¹

Given that the BJP's response to the Mandal controversy had entrenched its image as an anti-reservations party in the eyes of marginalized groups, the BJP has felt it necessary to reiterate its support of reservations for Dalit groups.⁴² The BJP now has a Scheduled Caste Morcha (forum) that deals specifically with Dalit issues, and makes frequent public statements on the reservations issue for Dalits. The party now makes fairly regular statements on the need for reservations for Dalit (not OBC) groups and the Congress mishandling of reservation issues. It has publicly criticized the Supreme Court order that reservations do not pertain to promotions, only to initial appointments, on the

⁴¹ Lochtefeld James E., "New Wine, Old Skins: The Sangh Parivar and the Transformation of Hinduism" in *Religion*, 26. 1996: 106. Another study conducted in four slums in Madras found that RSS and Hindu Munnani volunteers, consisting of 10 to 15 brahmin youths, engaging in various public activities to assimilate the dalits into a pan-Hindu identity also simultaneously cultivated a hatred for Muslims, occasionally offering money to launch hatred campaigns against Muslims, and inciting riots. However, this attempt to develop an anti-Muslim consciousness in the process of developing a Hindu identity are only partially successful as subaltern groups also recognize the contradictions of an exploitative caste hierarchy and the solidarities of an inter-religious class consciousness. See S. Anandhi, *Contending Identities: Dalits and Secular Politics in Madras Slums*, Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1995.

⁴² The BJP had increased its share of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe seats in parliament from 22 in 1991 to 41 in the 1996 elections. (Harendar Baweja, "Changing Face of Parliament", in *India Today*, July 15, 1996) However, the party did not field a single Muslim candidate in that election. ("Different Strokes" in *India Today*, July 15, 1996.) Dipankar Gupta has attributed the rise of factionalism and dissension within the famously disciplined BJP to this attempted broadening of its support base as the superficial unity based on urban upper-caste hegemony is forced to "face the alternative lifestyles, ethics and ambitions of non-urban backward castes." (Dipankar Gupta, "Religio-Nationalism: Dissensions within the BJP" in *Times of India*, Sept 6, 1996.) BJP support of the Mandal issue has also caused significant rift with the RSS and the Shiv Sena.

grounds that these groups continue to need as much public assistance as possible to regain their rightful place in society.⁴³

I pointed out earlier that BJP gestures toward Dalits is predicated on the need to project the unity of Hindu India. It is interesting in that light to look at the party's position with respect to reservations for other religious groups. Demands to extend reservations to Muslim and Christian communities has met with stiff resistance from the BJP. The argument has been made by certain Christian and Muslim groups that lower caste converts to Islam and Christianity continue to face some of the same economic and social disadvantages as lower caste Hindus, and hence deserve the same kind of reservations as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs. The argument has been made that even though Islam and Christianity are theologically caste-less religions, they maintain many of the caste and class stratifications of Hindu India.⁴⁴ The reservations list had been expanded in 1950 to include lower-class Hindu converts to Sikhism (or Mazhabi Sikhs) and in 1990 to Buddhists of Scheduled Caste origins. Yet, the demand to include Muslims and Christian converts has been controversial. As stated by BJP MP Vijay Kumar Malhotra: "These people were lured into Christianity with promises of jobs,

⁴³ See "BJP Demands Restoration of Reservation in Promotion for SC and ST by Constitutional Amendment", Statement adopted by the National Executive of the BJP as reproduced in BJP Today, April 1-15, 1994: 12-13. Also see "Need to ensure voting by Scheduled Caste voters without fear and pressure", statement issued to the press by Rattan Lal Kataria, All India Secretary of the Scheduled Caste Morcha, as reproduced in BJP Today, February 16-28, 1995: 5; "Reservation for SC and ST, Resolution adopted by the National Executive of BJP SC Morcha, 27-28 August, 1994, as reproduced in BJP Today ? : 8; "BJP & Congress Performance: A Comparison" in BJP Today ?; "Neglect of Welfare Programme of SC/ST", Resolution adopted in the National Executive of the BJP SC Morcha on 27-28 August, 1994 as reproduced in BJP Today September 16-30, 1994: 6-7. BJP has been publicly criticized by the RSS for joining other political parties in appeasing the backward classes in a "conspiracy to divide the Hindu society." (RSS chief Rajendra Singh quoted in "Hindu Divided Society" in India Today, December 15, 1996: pp 30)

⁴⁴ See Imtiaz Ahmad, Caste and Social Stratification among Muslims in India, Manohar Press, New Delhi, 1978, for a discussion of the kinds of divisions and kinship patterns that remain among Indian Muslims. See James Massey, Dalits in India: Religion as a Source of Bondage or Liberation with Special Reference to Christians, Manohar Press, New Delhi, 1995 for a discussion of the existence of economic and social

education and medical facilities, and because they were told that there is no caste system among Christians. If they want reservations, let them come back to the Hindu fold.”⁴⁵

The concern is also expressed that support of these demands by parties on the left is just one more instance of the “appeasement of minorities” and reflects how minority interests are privileged at the expense of Hindu interests. It is pointed out that these groups are trying to seek advantage both as minorities and as Dalits, *at the expense of Hindu Dalits*.⁴⁶ Protests organized by the SC morcha of the BJP have attempted to warn Dalit groups that they would lose out if SC status were extended to Dalit Christians.⁴⁷ The BJP attempt to cut across caste and class divisions, by reaching out to Dalit groups could also then be seen as an attempt to disrupt the formation of a “trans-religious subaltern solidarity” that could arise as a threat to upper caste-class interests that the BJP represents.⁴⁸

casteism among Christians in India, and the discrimination faced by dalit Christians from not just non-dalit Christians and Hindus, but also the Church as well as state institutions.

⁴⁵ As quoted in “Newsnotes” in India Today, December 31, 1995: 14. This is countered by activists on the grounds that religious groups need to be looked at in particular socio-historical conditions, rather than in abstract, general terms. As stated by Saral Kumar Chatterjee, co-chairman of the All India Christian People’s forum (AICPF), which has been fighting for Dalit Christian rights: “Contrary to the basis of the conversion, the act of conversion did not lift the newly baptised out of their socio-economic milieu.” (as quoted in Newsnotes, India Today, May 15, 1995: 13) Or as Archbishop Powathil, Roman Catholic bishop of the Changanacherry archdiocese of Kerala and one of the leaders of the movement puts it: “The social and economic disabilities of several centuries do not simply disappear because of a change in religion. Further, a Dalit Christian is not living in a society that is totally Christian.” (as quoted in “Newsnotes” in India Today, December 31, 1995: 14). See Farzand Ahmed and Javed M. Ansari, “Minority Matters”, in India Today, Nov 30, 1994: 42-43 for a discussion of reservations for Muslims.

⁴⁶ See “The Myth of ‘Dalit Christians’” in BJP Today, July 16-31, 1996.

⁴⁷ It is interesting to see how the threat of Muslim refugees from Bangladesh to Dalit interests is also played up in the Scheduled Caste Morcha of the BJP, as in the following quote from a speech made by Bangaru Laxman, president, Scheduled Caste Morcha of BJP at the National Executive Meeting of Morcha held at Delhi on August 27-28, 1994: “The large scale infiltration of Bangladeshis in Assam, West Bengal, Bihar and other states has posed threat not only to national security but also disturbed socio-economic & political life of SC and STs. The women folk of SC and STs are being kidnapped and sold in flesh markets by infiltrators. The former labor majority of whom are from SC/ST’s (sic) are being replaced by infiltrators who are prepared to work at much lower wages.” Reproduced as “Eighty percent Scheduled Cast population slipped below poverty line”, in BJP Today, September 16-30, 1994. SC and ST are abbreviated terms for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe respectively.

⁴⁸ See Praful Bidwai, “Age of Empowerment: Muslim OBCs Discover Mandal”, Times of India, September 12, 1996 for such an argument.

The BJP call for an organic and indivisible Hindu nation is ultimately unsuccessful if lower caste-class groups find their interests aligned with groups from other religious communities. In the construction of a “Muslim other” is a simultaneous project for the definition and consolidation of the “Hindu self”. I will return to this issue of how the Hindu nation is constructed in the next chapter. Let me end here by pointing out that it is not incidental that BJP president L.K. Advani connected the issue of reservations for other religious groups with the specter of Muslim nationalism and the disintegration of India. In the words of Advani, reservations to Muslims and Christians is “harmful to India’s national unity and integrity. It is only a step away from the call for separate electorates, which was demanded by the Muslim League before Partition because the logic and the perspective behind the two is the same.”⁴⁹

To end this section, the point that I am trying to emphasize here is that Hindu-Muslim antagonism that the BJP plays on is not any more natural, inevitable or prior to other linguistic, regional or caste conflicts, but becomes real and intense through particular kinds of constructions and their reproduction in conditions that makes such constructions possible and popular. In contemporary Indian politics, the politicization of subordinate caste/class interests threatens the existing upper caste/class hegemony in Indian politics. The prominence of Hindu-Muslim antagonism in BJP discourse, and its increasing resonance in the Indian political mainstream, needs to be understood within this changing caste-class configuration of contemporary Indian politics.

⁴⁹ L.K. Advani, “Janata Dal Vote Bank Politics” in BJP Today, May 1-15, 1996.

Part II: Liberalization/Globalization

"a swadeshi of a self-confident, hardworking modern nation that can deal with the world on terms of equality...*India must liberalize, industrialize and modernize - but it must do so the Indian way*".⁵⁰

The resurgence of Hindu nationalism in the mid to late 1980s occurred with the opening up of the Indian economy and its increasing integration into globalized systems of production and consumption.⁵¹ The liberalization program inaugurated formally and with substantial vigor under the Narasimha Rao-Manmohan Singh regime, had been in

⁵⁰ BJP, *Humanistic Approach to Economic Development*, 1992: 10-11; my italics

⁵¹ This convergence between liberalisation and the rise of Hindutva politics is often noted by scholars and political commentators. See for eg. Manoranjan Mohanty, "Democracy Limited" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Mar 30, 1996: 804-805 and Rajat Kanta Ray, "Lost for Ideology" in *India Today*, May 15, 1996: pp 45. However, most such accounts find this convergence in the general breakdown of the Nehruvian political structure, without a close analysis of the issue. While some authors note the structural conditions created by democratisation and liberalisation for the emergence of contemporary Hindu nationalism, they fail to follow through on the discursive implications of those changes. In other words, most such analyses fail to look at how BJP discourse strategically positions itself in terms of those conditions and the insecurities generated out of them. Eric Kolodner notes the social and economic dislocations caused by the failure of 'modernization', resulting in uncertainties and insecurities among Indian citizens, but fails to explore how the BJP discourse taps into those insecurities. (Eric Kolodner, "The Political Economy of the Rise and Fall(?) of Hindu Nationalism," in *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 25 No. 2, 1995: 233-253) This is also true of Ashutosh Varshney's analysis that notes the anxiety generated by the mobilization of lower castes and the market liberalisation of the economy. Yet, for an article whose title includes the phrase "politics of anxiety", there is a curious neglect of how this anxiety is exploited by Hindu nationalism. (Ashutosh Varshney, "Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the Politics of Anxiety," *Daedalus*, v 122 n 3, Summer 1993: 226-261) Aijaz Ahmad's Marxist analysis finds that with the consensus among the bourgeoisie on liberalisation, the upper caste-class Hindutva ideology is 'naturally' positioned to enter the "ideological vacuum" created by the erosion of Nehruvian ideology. Yet, there is no analysis of how this positioning actually occurs. (Aijaz Ahmad, "In the Eye of the Storm: The Left Chooses," in *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 1, 1996: 1329-1343. This is also true of Sumanta Bose's otherwise excellent analysis, that fails to look in particular at the discursive contestations in the ideology of liberalisation through which the BJP asserts its position. (Sumantra Bose, "'Hindu Nationalism' and the Crisis of the Indian State: A Theoretical Perspective," in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (ed.), *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997: 104-164.) The only exception I found was Thomas Blom Hansen, "Globalization and Nationalist Imaginations: Hindutva's Promise of Equality through Difference", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 9, 1996: 603-616. While I found Hansen's analysis extremely useful and draw on in my own analysis, I believe that he does not adequately address how some of the contradictions in the BJP discourse on liberalisation are resolved, and how in so doing the BJP is able to interpellate a variety of subject positions.

progress at least since the middle 1980s under Rajiv Gandhi-V.P. Singh's rule⁵², and is part of what is increasingly seen as the 'globalization' of market forces and the triumph of capitalism in the wake of the demise of the Soviet Union. In India, the emerging consensus on liberalization is truly remarkable, given that it attempts to replace a well entrenched statist developmentalist apparatus that had been linked to the post-colonial national project of Nehru's India. While there are various ambivalences reflected in the positions on various sides of the political spectrum, there seems to be a generally enthusiastic reception to the creation of a market economy, and the advent of foreign capital, on both the political right and the left.⁵³ State governments of all political hues have been turning investor-friendly. Even the perhaps most radical group within the

⁵² Manmohan Singh and V.P. Singh were the finance ministers under the Congress(I) prime ministerships of Narasimha Rao and Rajiv Gandhi respectively. The personae of the finance minister has now taken on great significance in projecting the economic orientation of the state, both to domestic constituents as well as to overseas investors. The selection and promotion of the Harvard educated, pro-market Chidambaram as the finance minister in the left-of-center United Front government reflects the same desire to project the continuity of the liberalization forces under that government. As stated later in the paper, the BJP's choice of Jaswant Singh as the finance minister in its short term in office after the 1996 elections was also based on similar considerations. It is interesting that V.P. Singh, who could perhaps be seen as the finance minister who set the liberalization ball rolling, has now become a champion of lower class and caste interests, and a strong voice for redistributive and social justice.

⁵³ Public Opinion surveys tend to show that more people are experiencing an improvement in their economic condition in the last few years. An India-Today MARG opinion poll in April 1996 showed that 41% of the population felt that their standard of living had improved over the past five years, while only 18% thought that it had worsened. (the figures for improvement were clearly higher for the middle classes than the poorer classes). Another ICSSR-CSDS-India Today survey found that as compared to 1971, the proportion of people who felt that they were better off in 1996 had increased from 20% to 29%, while the proportion of people who felt that they were worse off in 1996 had halved. Further more people had higher expectations of improved future financial conditions 1996 (48%) than they did in 1971 (39%), while fewer people expected to do worse in the future (9% down from 19%). See India Today, April 30, 1996 and India Today, August 31, 1996. There seems to be a general sense of agreement among the political parties that the current economic reforms have played a large role in creating this increased sense of well-being, especially among the middle classes. Yet interestingly, one of the same surveys showed that only 19% of the population had heard of the new economic policies, of which only about half (10%) approved of them. Of these figures, a much higher percentage of the college-educated (66%) and of the urban (32%) electorate had heard of the policies than the rural (14%) and very poor (7%) sections of the electorate, the corresponding approval for them also being much higher for the former two groups (41% and 17%) than the latter two (7% and 3%). See India Today, August 31, 1996. Further, another India Today-ORG-MARG poll more recently shows that there seems also to be widespread continued support for various social redistributive programs and that it is only among the educated classes that there seems to be clear support for state retreat from involvement in the economy. See India Today, August 31, 1996 and India Today, August 18, 1997.

United Front alliance, represented by Jyoti Basu's Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) that has held government power in the state of West Bengal for several years, has in more recent times welcomed economic reforms and has courted foreign capital quite enthusiastically. BJP led states like Maharashtra and Gujarat are the top investment destinations in the country. As noted by press commentator Shefali Rekhi, "chief ministers of various states are not letting the political ideologies of the parties they belong to stand in the way of attracting investment."⁵⁴ How does the BJP situate itself, ideologically and in practice, in this scenario?

Liberalization and Swadeshi: BJP's Ambivalences

The BJP position on liberalization and foreign capital reflects much ambivalence and many contradictions. The BJP has quite clearly adopted a pro-capitalist position since the 1980s, moving away from the more socialist-Gandhian orientation of its predecessor Jan Sangh, exemplified in the economic philosophy of ideologue Deendayal Upadhyaya's 'Integral Humanism'. Upadhyaya's economic philosophy is an interesting attempt to find a middle ground between capitalism and socialism, evaluating both systems for their respective merits, but critiquing both for their excesses⁵⁵ and alienness⁵⁶. Yet, his discussion of a desirable economic system for India is based more on a scathing and sometimes quite insightful critique of the tendency for a capitalist system to produce an endless cycle of wasteful consumption demands, and ends up with a

⁵⁴ Shefali Rekhi, "Capitalist-Re-orientation", in India Today, December 31, 1995: 71.

⁵⁵ "Democracy and capitalism joined hands to give a free reign to exploitation. Socialism replaced capitalism and brought with it an end to democracy and individual freedom." (Deendayal Upadhyaya, Integral Humanism, Bharatiya Janata Party, New Delhi, 1985: 8)

⁵⁶ "Foreign ideologies are not universal...those who would like to make western ideologies the basis of our progress forget that these ideologies have arisen in certain special situations and time. These are not necessarily universal." (ibid: 11)

thrust on social welfare policies (education, health care), economic decentralization (small-scale industry with more worker participation) and especially, “*Swadeshi*”⁵⁷. Upadhyaya stresses the need to decrease dependence on foreign capital, technology and consumption, and rely on indigenous industry based on “*Bharatiya* (Indian) technology” that would “develop suitable machines for *Bharatiya* conditions taking note of the availability and nature of the various factors of production”.⁵⁸ Even though the BJP continues to advocate Deendayal Upadhyaya’s economic philosophy, what has been more interesting is the quite effective marginalization of the anti-foreign capital ‘*Swadeshi*’ camp within the ranks of the Hindu nationalist movement.⁵⁹ As I will shortly point out, policies of states where the BJP has been in power has been quite receptive to foreign investments, and the central leadership has often also indicated its own openness to foreign capital. Yet, BJP discourse continues to be characterized by this ambivalence on the issue of liberalization. A survey of the bi-weekly journal, BJP Today, published by the BJP clearly shows the abundance of articles that focus on the *Swadeshi* theme and critique liberalization quite heavily. Party leaders will often make public pronouncements toeing the *Swadeshi* line, yet will often also go out of their way to reassure their openness to liberalization and foreign investment. Why has the BJP in the last decade been so divided over the question of liberalization and *swadeshi*? What explains this ambivalence and how does the BJP resolve these contradictions?

⁵⁷ *ibid*: 48-59. *Swadeshi* literally meaning ‘from one’s own country’ or native, translates in Indian political argot as ‘economic nationalism’.

⁵⁸ *ibid*: 57-58.

⁵⁹ Articles published in BJP Today, the bi-weekly journal/magazine published by the BJP, refer quite regularly to Deendayal Upadhyaya’s ‘Integral Humanism’ as the economic philosophy from which the party draws inspiration. This also came up in a number of personal conversations with BJP leaders and activists, many of whom insisted that I read Upadhyaya’s treatise.

Partly the ambivalence arises from the divisions within the ranks of Hindu nationalists on the issue of liberalization and swadeshi. The relatively more right-wing RSS has more or less consistently taken a stand against liberalization and globalization, and has often attempted to push the BJP on this issue. In early 1992, the RSS produced a new policy of Swadeshi, in which it drew up a list of 326 products produced by multinationals and the possible alternative products produced by Indian-owned manufacturers, and urged ‘true patriots’ to consume local goods and reject the depurification of culture through Western consumption.⁶⁰ RSS strategists have issued calls for the boycott of “*firangi*” (foreign) goods, often focussing on well-known MNC brands such as Pepsi, Coca-Cola and Colgate. The Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) – an organization floated by the RSS to fight “exploitation” by multinationals has organized protest marches and undertaken nation-wide propaganda campaigns to raise consciousness about “economic colonialism”. In early preparations for the 1996 elections, the RSS instructed some of its other off-shoot organizations such as the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (Indian Worker’s Organization) and the Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarti Parishad (All India Student’s Council) to take the message of swadeshi to two lakh (100,000) villages (about a third of the country) to convince the rural population to reject the Congress(I) Government’s liberalization policy.⁶¹

This strong pro-Swadeshi activism has created substantial dissension within the BJP. Many BJP leaders come from the RSS, continue to maintain strong ties with RSS networks, and rely heavily on the RSS for grassroots organization. SJM hardliners like Mahesh Sharma, secretary of the Deendayal Research Foundation in Delhi are totally

⁶⁰ Thomas Blom Hansen, “Globalization and Nationalist Imaginations: Hindutva’s Promise of Equality through Difference”, in Economic and Political Weekly, March 9, 1996: 611

opposed to the entry of foreign capital and MNCs. Echoing the philosophy of Upadhyaya, RSS chief Rajendra Singh points out that “in the name of liberalization, multinational corporations are coming in, as a result of which our small scale units are folding up”.⁶² But a substantial section of BJP leaders are much more ambivalent about liberalization and economic reform. Moderates within the party feel that the RSS is forcing the BJP to adopt Swadeshi as a poll issue, without understanding the exigencies of political power that the BJP has to deal with.

Given its rapidly growing popularity among the upwardly mobile urban middle classes, it becomes difficult for the BJP to take an anti-reform position in light of the emerging consensus on the necessity of economic reforms within this group. Yet, the emerging consensus on liberalization is also not without its own ambivalences, and as I will show in the next section the opening up of the Indian economy also generates certain kinds of anxieties in this economic class, as well as other classes. Further, the BJP’s image as the authentic and legitimate voice of Indian/Hindu nationalism also needs to conform to the modernist aspirations of middle-class India. *I will argue that Swadeshi becomes one of the sites through which the contradictions in that articulation between tradition and modernity are resolved.*

One of the ways that the BJP tries to resolve its pro and anti reform contradictions is by disaggregating the category of ‘economic reform’. In BJP discourse one often finds a distinction made between internal liberalization (or reforms) and external liberalization (or more often, globalization). Internal liberalization refers to the dismantling of the bureaucratic apparatus and the rules and regulations inhibiting private industry in India,

⁶¹ See Newsnotes in India Today, December 31, 1994: 15.

⁶² India Today, December 15, 1995: 63

or what in popular usage has come to be known as the ‘licence-permit quota Raj’. The BJP claims that these are reforms that the party has been advocating for a period much longer than the Congress. In fact, it is the Congress that created and propagated the system that it now claims to reform.

“Long before the Congress latched on to the mantra of liberalization, the BJP has been advocating decontrol, deregulation and debureaucratization of the economy. We have been severe critics of the license-permit-quota raj which the Nehru-Mahalanobis model has inflicted on the country.”⁶³

On this basis, it is claimed that the BJP is the original reformist party in the country, and the Congress claim to that achievement is spurious.

External liberalization or globalization here refers to the opening of the Indian market to MNCs and foreign investors. It is here of course where the ambivalence among the BJP ranks is most prominent.

“The BJP has always been opposed to the License-Permit-Quota Raj inflicted on the country by the Congress. We have therefore, been protagonists of internal liberalization, that is, decontrol and deregulation...But in the name of liberalization, New Delhi, has developed an infatuation for globalization which, in a country like ours cannot only aggravate our problem of unemployment, but also widen the chasm between the rich and the poor”.⁶⁴

Such statements against the perils of globalization are common, and as I will indicate in the next section, speak to certain kinds of anxieties that globalization generates. It is interesting also to find, as I did in my research, that while the swadeshi theme occurs much more prominently in speeches made to party members and workers and in a journal such as BJP Today whose readership is primarily composed of party loyalists, the party

⁶³ L.K. Advani in his Presidential Address at Bangalore, 18th June, 1993 as quoted in “India First” by Jay Dubashi in BJP Today, June 1-15, 1994: 11.

⁶⁴ L.K. Advani, “Congress guilty of three grave sins – compromising National, Social & Economic Interests,” in BJP Today, Jan 1-15, 1995: 4-6

takes a much more guarded approach to liberalization in its statements to the general press and pronouncements to the general public. For instance, even though the section on economic policy in the 1996 BJP Election Manifesto is titled “Our Economy and Direction: Economic Growth and Employment through Swadeshi”, there is hardly any discussion of Swadeshi at all, and its enthusiasm for liberalization (as globalization) is quite clearly reflected in its clear rejection of inward-looking, isolationist policies. The manifesto states that

“the BJP welcomes foreign investment, because we hold that it supplies knowledge, technology and know-how and sharpens the quality and competitive edge of our economy...BJP stand for a modern and progressive India, open to new ideas, new technology and fresh capital”.⁶⁵

Yet sometimes this ambivalence reflects itself in policy, and creates a certain amount of discomfort in the urban middle classes, especially in business circles, about the economic orientation of the BJP. Two such prominent cases were the Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC) controversy in Delhi and the Enron controversy in Maharashtra. In December 1995 the BJP-governed Delhi administration served notice on the multinational Pepsico owned KFC outlet in Delhi on the grounds of the excessive presence of sodium aluminum phosphate (SAP) in the food, that Delhi chief minister Madan Lal Khurana believed could cause cancer. However, when that charge did not stand up, the outlet was closed on sanitary grounds after a few flies were found in the kitchen. This was at least a temporary yielding to the pressures imposed by pro-Swadeshi forces, the demonstrations against the outlet being led by the SJM, although the outlet did

⁶⁵ Bharatiya Janata Party, Election Manifesto BJP Publication No. E/3/96, New Delhi, 1996: 23-24. The last sentence is followed by the sentence “A modern India to the BJP is not a Westernized India; a pale copy of the Western economic models” (pp 24), and as I will point out in the next section, it is this disjuncture between modernization and westernization that both reflects and resolves the contradictions in the Hindu nationalist positions on tradition and modernity.

subsequently re-open. In the state of Maharashtra, the BJP with its local coalition partner, the Shiv Sena⁶⁶, attempted to scrap a multi-million dollar project for the construction of a power plant at Dabhol in Maharashtra through a joint venture of the Maharashtra government with the U.S. based MNC Enron, on the grounds of corruption of Congress officials who had negotiated the deal, and on the claim that it would subject the Indian consumer to foreign competition. But the project was revived with a new package worked out, in spite of continued strong opposition from a section within the BJP.⁶⁷

The Maharashtra case is particularly interesting because the presence of the more radical Shiv Sena in the Hindu nationalist coalition government has created much more apprehension about the government's orientation to economic liberalization. Yet, when the coalition first came to power in Maharashtra, the administration felt it necessary to reassure the business community, both within and outside India, of its openness to foreign

⁶⁶ The Shiv Sena is much more radical than the BJP in its Hindu nationalist orientation. The Shiv Sena is also generally believed to be more Swadeshi-oriented than the BJP, one difference among others that has caused some difficulties in the functioning of the coalition in Maharashtra. However, the sometimes close nexus between Hindu nationalist organizations like the Shiv Sena and the demands of capitalists is reflected in often very disturbing, violent ways. In Maharashtra in particular, investigative reports in the aftermath of the post-Ayodhya riots targeted at a very large number of Muslims revealed how such supposedly 'spontaneous' uprisings were accompanied by the evacuation of large areas of land in predominantly Muslim areas that had been sought for a while for industrial purposes. Big companies such as Larsen and Toubro, Standard and Chartered Bank and Bisleri have promoted Shiv Sena labor unions to oust existing left labor unions and the Shiv Sena has provided its cadres to industrialists to break labor strikes.

⁶⁷ Similar instances of resistance to foreign capital have also occurred of course from other political quarters. In September 1995, KFC faced a similar closure in Bangalore after the Janata Dal government in the state charged that the food contained unacceptably high levels of monosodium glutamate. The US multinational Cargill faced opposition from anti-MNC lobbies in Karnataka led by the farmer supported KRSS, where its seed unit and company head office were attacked, and in Gujarat, where it had to discard its proposed salt unit. This opposition organized to an extent on the theme of KFC as an "icon of American corporate culture" has been joined by prominent animal-rights activists like Maneka Gandhi and environmentalists like Vandana Shiva, who point to the larger issues of biodiversity and food security in India." See Stephen David, "KFC Controversy: Giving MNCs the Jitters" in *India Today*, October 15, 1995 and N.K. Singh, "'Swadeshi: Ideological Posturings" in *India Today*, December 15, 1995. Opposition to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which the Indian government formally ratified on April 15th, 1994 brought the BJP together with parties and organizations on the Left, as well as several centrist parties and fringe groups in the middle. See Zafar Agha, "The Opposition: Damning Dunkel" in *India Today*, April 15, 1994: 27-30. The effectiveness of the propaganda work done by Sangh Parivar organizations like the Akhil Bharatiya Vidhyarti Parishad and the Bharatiya Kisan Sangh can be evidenced

investment. In answering a question on the future economic policy of the state, the newly elected chief minister Manohar Joshi declared that “the present government policy need not be changed. Maharashtra will always welcome investments but we will carefully scrutinize the terms and conditions before accepting them.”⁶⁸ As the BSE (Bombay Stock Exchange) index started falling as a reaction to the newly elected BJP-Shiv Sena government in the assembly elections in March 1995, Joshi declared that his party was not “totally opposed to liberalization, and Javadekar, the BJP state secretary declared “we are investor-friendly. MNCs which bring in technological advancement are welcome. But not those which duplicate our local industries.”⁶⁹ Even more interestingly, after the Enron controversy was resolved, Joshi felt it necessary to point out that “(o)ur policy is to welcome liberalization, we welcome foreign investment in all products. I must make this clear – *for all products*. Enron was an individual issue, it was not against the company but against the terms and conditions on which the previous contract was “signed”.⁷⁰ This emphasis on “all products” is a fairly radical departure from the fairly consistent stand of the BJP that it is opposed to the entry of foreign capital in the area of consumer non-durables, and was a controversial statement even at the time. That it came from the more radical Shiv-Sena leader makes it all the more interesting.

in the finding that villages in two districts in eastern Uttar Pradesh believed that “Dunkel is an *angrezi shasan* (English rule) which will take away their land and their seeds”. (*ibid*: 29)

⁶⁸ Interview with Manohar Joshi in *India Today*, March 31, 1995: 43

⁶⁹ L.Rattanani and S.Koppikar, “In Step with Liberalization” in *India Today*, March 31, 1995: 45

⁷⁰ Manohar Joshi, in *India Today*, December 15, 1995: 40; my italics. Similarly, when asked about the apprehensiveness of many businessmen of the BJP’s *swadeshi* slogan, Keshubhai Patel, newly elected BJP chief minister of Gujarat answered clearly that “*we are for liberalization* but against complete globalization and the roping in of multinationals in areas where our own manufacturers are competent enough.”

(Interview with Keshubhai Patel, in *India Today*, March 31, 1995: 47; my italics) Suresh Mehta, who replaced Keshubhai Patel as the chief minister of the BJP government in Gujarat, stressed on several occasions, that an Enron-like scrapping would never occur in his state. (See Shefali Rekhi, “Capitalist Re-orientation” in *India Today*, December 31, 1995)

Given the emerging consensus on liberalization at the national level, commentators in the press often *assume* the infeasibility of holding on to the swadeshi plank with any measure of success, and see BJP rhetoric on the issue as simply that – rhetoric. As commentator Uday Mahurkar points out in analyzing the coming to power of the BJP government in Gujarat:

“The saffron wave in Gujarat may have evoked suspicion elsewhere, but in the state, the emerging consensus is that the BJP will not be inimical to the state’s new industrial policy...*After all, no one actually believes that there can be a reversal in the way things are going.*”⁷¹

Or as commentators on the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra note:

“Although the BJP is perceived to be pro-industry, people are apprehensive about the Shiv Sena. Yet, experts feel that the Sena is unlikely to do anything to harm industry...Industrialists do not seem too perturbed by the stand...*The BJP knows that it has nothing to gain from an anti-industry image, especially if it wants to stake its claim to New Delhi in a year’s time.*”⁷²

It is true that at the national level, one of the first acts of the short-term Vajpayee government in the immediate aftermath of the 1996 Lok Sabha elections was to address the concerns raised in the foreign press about India’s future economic trajectory, and alleviate the worries of foreign investors in India. Vajpayee’s selection and promotion of Jaswant Singh as his finance minister, who is widely seen as a moderate in favor of the free market, was an attempt to both address concerns abroad, and amongst the urban middle-classes in India. In an address to the Federation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Vajpayee, as leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha at the time and a few months before the 1996 general elections, recognized that “in the

⁷¹ Uday Mahurkar, in “Money Matters” in India Today, March 31, 1995; my italics

interdependent world we live in, no country is an island”, and reassured the business community,

“The BJP now and in the future is committed to economic reforms and to Liberalization. By reforms we mean a process of cleaning up the plethora of regulations put in place earlier for centrally controlling the economy. Simultaneously, reforms mean the introducing of appropriate legislation to facilitate trade and industry by removing all unnecessary rules, regulations and restrictions bearing in mind the public good. In our view, liberalization is the logical corollary to economic reforms”.⁷³

BJP national general secretary and chief spokesperson, K.L Sharma addressed several forums during his tour of the U.S., in which he attempted to convince the international business community of a welcoming business environment in India for foreign investors under a BJP regime.⁷⁴ If the BJP policy on economic reform is not much different from the Congress reform policies, then what does the high-pitched Swadeshi plank serve?

The Cultural Discontents of Liberalization and Globalization

“This desire to compensate for real fractures through symbolic unities mirrors the double movement of the market, which unifies the nation as a single system of exchange and circulation while also fragmenting it into infinitely competing individuals, firms, communities and regions. In short, then, the market both unites and fragments the nation in a single motion. It alone cannot hold the nation together, especially in the context of scarcity and of acute maldistribution of what is available within that scarcity, and a society, moreover, which is the world’s most heterogeneous in its sociological composition. The ultimate logic of ‘liberalization’ and the market, if left to its own devices, leads toward disintegration.”⁷⁵

“One must take account of the fact that India is not just a market of trading activities; it is a Nation! While we welcome liberalization and are

⁷² L.Rattanani and S.Koppikar, “In Step with Liberalization” in India Today, March, 31, 1995: 45; my italics.

⁷³ Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Dec 6th, 1995; Text of speech reproduced as “Swadeshi Means ‘The Spirit that India Can Do It’” in BJP Today, December 16-31, 1995.

⁷⁴ “BJP General Secretary in U.S.A.”, report in BJP Today, June 16-30, 1995.

⁷⁵ Aijaz Ahmad, “In the Eye of the Storm: The Left Chooses,” in Economic and Political Weekly, June 1, 1996; pp 1336-7.

allowing foreigners to do business, we make it clear that the paramount importance is our National Interest”.⁷⁶

The opening up of the Indian economy to world markets seems to have generated at least two kinds of related cultural reactions to which the BJP, as the party claiming the legitimate credentials of Indian cultural nationalism, has had to respond in some manner.⁷⁷ On the one hand, liberalization and globalization has brought into question once again what had seemed to be a settled question of Indian nationalism – “What is India’s distinctive place in the world?” Relatedly, the process has released a whole host of insecurities and anxieties related to the “Indian way of life” and raised questions on the minds of many on how best to preserve “Indian culture” as India integrates into the world. Both these anxieties are responses to the particular postcolonial predicament of Indian nationalism – to retain “authenticity” in the face of “mimicry”. Both speak to what BJP President L.K. Advani calls the “cultural dislocation caused by unchecked globalization of the Indian economy.”⁷⁸ The first of these takes on the nationalist challenge of “refusing to be colonized” in this postcolonial world by retaining the sovereign authority over Indian political space. The norm of “sovereignty” functions here as the anchor for “authenticity”, where authenticity is defined as the capacity to have a say in who can or cannot infringe on Indian political space, the ability to hold ones own in a world of superpowers and their stooges, and Swadeshi helps define this position. This anti-imperialist position strikes a chord even in those who are otherwise opposed to BJP’s

⁷⁶ J.A.K.L. Sharma, “India is a ‘Nation’ not ‘Market’”, *BJP Today*, 1995: 23-24.

⁷⁷ I draw on Thomas Blom Hansen, “Globalization and Nationalist Imaginations: Hindutva’s Promise of Equality through Difference”, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 9, 1996: 603-616 for my analysis here.

communal politics. In the words of former chief justice of India, V.R. Krishna Iyer, “while I see highly objectionable factors in the BJP and elsewhere, there are certain matters like swadeshi, self-reliance and anti-U.S. hegemony, which are welcome aspects of BJP politics”, even though he quickly adds the disclaimer “if what it says is what it really means.”⁷⁹ The second of these speaks more directly to the fear of cultural imperialism, and it is here that authenticity gets translated into an “internal quality” of Indianness (read the “Hindu way of life”) that is imperiled by Westernization. It is here that BJP discourse helps create a tradition/modernity dichotomy and the theme of Swadeshi then helps in partially, and problematically, resolving the contradictions that emerge from that dichotomy.

Indian distinctiveness in the world

In India, as in many post-colonial economies, the articulation of the nationalist imagination with the themes of ‘self reliance’ and ‘economic independence’ occupied a central place in state discourses and practices. Even though it was the growing urban middle classes increasingly experiencing the inefficiencies of the very large, developmentalist state that demanded and supported the reform and liberalization efforts of the state, that did not necessarily mean any quick and easy resolution of the issues that these raised about Indian national identity. Even if the Nehruvian ‘mixed-economy’ state, with a strong socialist thrust was perceived as increasingly dysfunctional by these middle

⁷⁸ L.K. Advani’s Presidential Address to the BJP National Council Session held on 10-12 June, 1994 at Vadodra, Gujarat, reproduced as “Basis of Nationalism is our Culture and Heritage” in BJP Today, June 16-30, 1994: 12.

⁷⁹ V.R. Krishna Iyer, in a letter to the editor, “Not BJP Alone”, written as a correction and clarification of his stand in an earlier joint letter signed by him calling for the consolidation of secular parties to defeat the BJP in forthcoming assembly elections in U.P.; Times of India, September 18, 1996.

classes, and liberalization adopted as means to redress these dysfunctions, it did not mean that the ideational implications for liberalization's place in the Indian national imagination had been quite worked out yet. In one sense, with liberalization the articulation of Nehru's nationalist visions of a "third path" (between capitalism and socialism) and what that vision entailed about Indian distinction and distinctiveness in a bipolar world of spheres of influence, was increasingly coming apart, and that raised various questions. How to deal with the disjuncture between the long held self-perception of middle-class Indians, of India as "the natural leader of Third World states", and the present marginalization of India in the global economy (particularly compared to East and Southeast Asia) and world politics?⁸⁰ How could India hold its own, politically and culturally, in the face of various external pressures? In the words of BJP leader, K.R. Malkani, "(t)here was a time when the Congress had a philosophy: it was Gandhism before 1947 and Nehruism after 1947. Today the Congress is neither Gandhian nor Nehruite; it is IMF-World Bankite."⁸¹ How is it possible to maintain Indian distinction in such a world? I argue that Swadeshi is a theme through which it becomes possible to speak to these anxieties and in so doing partially resolve the anxieties generated by this disarticulation in the Indian national imagination.

Let us see how the BJP brings up these issues and how it speak to them. The caution of "economic imperialism" and the fear of losing economic sovereignty in the face of IMF-World Bank pressures is a recurrent theme in many writings and speeches by BJP leaders and advocates. When the Congress in 1991 accepted the economic reform package of the IMF, the BJP as the major opposition party at the time took a stand on the

⁸⁰ See Hansen, 1996.

reform program as encroaching on the economic sovereignty of India.⁸² It is this fear of losing India's autonomy in a world of strong powers that reflects itself in the following quote:

“Government's impassioned advocacy of globalization often smacks of diffidence and helplessness. If the world has something to offer us, we too have a great deal to offer to the world. Indians do very well outside India. Why can't they do as well, or better, in India? We cannot shut ourselves from the rest of the world but *we have to be careful to see that we are not swamped by the world either*”.⁸³

It is in that sense that Enron is now celebrated in BJP discourse as the symbol not of opposition to liberalization, but of the ability of the BJP to stand up to the superpowers, even as BJP administrators go out of their way to convince investors that an Enron-like case would not arise under their administration. In Swadeshi discourse, it becomes important to emphasize that India is not a dependent regime, even though it aspires to higher goals.

“BJP is totally opposed to the Rao government's approach to foreign investment. It seems to believe that this country cannot progress without foreign capital. This is ridiculous. *India is not a banana republic*. We have high savings rate, though perhaps not as high as it could be, or as high as in China and other countries in Southeast Asia.”⁸⁴

It is not just economic imperialism that is important here. Globalization also entails the risk of losing political sovereignty, since “the constitution of India will have no

⁸¹ K.R. Malkani, “The Secret of BJP's Success”, in BJP Today, Oct 16-31, 1995:19-20.

⁸² See BJP Economic Resolutions, Bharatiya Janata Party Publications, New Delhi, 1995 for many discussions of IMF loans, with their many attached conditionalities, amounting to “international economic imperialism”.

⁸³ L.K. Advani, BJP President, in his Presidential Address at Bangalore, 18 June, 1993 as quoted in Jay Dubashi, “India First” in BJP Today, June 1-15, 1994; 11; my italics.

⁸⁴ Jay Dubashi, “India First” in BJP Today, June 1-15, 1994; 13; my italics.

meaning once you become a member of W.T.O”.⁸⁵ This of course resonates well with colonial anxieties of the loss of political autonomy in a hegemonic world. Along with that is the place that India enjoyed as a resistor to colonialism and as a leader in such resistance. Without its distinctive place in the world, India loses its place as the leader of the third world.

“A decision has to be made whether India will continue its Political and Economic sovereignty as an Independent Nation or, it will get transformed into a Commission Agent on behalf of multinationals of the Capitalist – G-7 countries...*You (the government) have a banana spine, where there should be a spine of steel. You do not have either the capacity or the capability to take other nations along with you in respect of these issues...You are pushing India into an unequal and exploitative world order.*”⁸⁶

With this loss of political sovereignty, globalization is shown to threaten Indian security interests as well. Commenting on what he perceived as the Indian government’s meek international position on issues such as Jammu and Kashmir, non-proliferation, production and test of fissile materials, etc., BJP president, Advani asks:

*“Is this the price we have to pay for globalization? Does India have to surrender its security interests to attract foreign investments? Is our sense of self-esteem so low that even a hint of American displeasure can prompt us to go crawling for forgiveness? These are not incidental questions. They touch upon our very existence as a proud, independent nation of 880 million. The question is: do we earn respect internationally if we are seen to be a pushover? A pushover is what the Rao government is turning India into.”*⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Murli Manohar Joshi, BJP member of parliament (and one of the top national leaders of the party) in a speech to the Rajya Sabha, 1994, critiquing the Indian government’s decision to sign the GATT agreement, reproduced in “GATT Treaty Ushers in an Exploitative World Order” in *BJP Today*, May 1-15, 1994: 9; my italics.

⁸⁶ *ibid*: 7-12; my italics.

⁸⁷ L.K. Advani’s Presidential Address to the BJP National Council Session held on 10-12 June, 1994 at Vadodra, Gujarat, reproduced as “Basis of Nationalism is our Culture and Heritage” in *BJP Today*, June 16-30, 1994: 10; my italics.

What is special about the BJP and its position on Swadeshi that makes it the party able to articulate Indian national pride in a way that others cannot? A very interesting article in BJP Today recognizes that other parties on the left have also critiqued liberalization, but then goes on to provide BJP the credit for *legitimate critique* since other opposition parties constitute what it calls a “loyal opposition”, accepting the basic premises of “Western rational thought” as does the Congress. Such parties, according to the article, critique the performance of the economy, but accept the modernization/Westernization paradigm and offer what we may call an “internal critique”. The author then goes on to claim that it is only the BJP and its position on Swadeshi that can and has offered what we may call an “ideological opposition”, and it able to do that by drawing explicitly on Indian heritage and culture.⁸⁸

Ultimately, since Swadeshi speaks on the terms of what is claimed as ‘authentically Indian’ (or not Western), the BJP appropriates the credentials of being the only political party able to restore Indian pride without sacrificing economic growth. It is this East-West or India/West dichotomy that frames the BJP discourse on Swadeshi, as I will elaborate further in the next section.

“The efforts of all economists and multinationals of the world will not be able to achieve the tiger-ization of India if we lose sight of our ethical base, our inheritance, or Dharma...As we approach the general elections it is important that the BJP project this distinctiveness.”⁸⁹

⁸⁸ See Romesh Diwan, “Impoverishment in the name of “liberalization”: Neo-Colonialism in the name of “globalization,” BJP Today, July 16-31, 1995: 20. Romesh Diwan, himself resident in the U.S., is a fairly regular writer in BJP Today and makes some very interesting observations on elites in India that I will refer to in the next chapter.

⁸⁹ L.K. Advani, Opening remarks of President of BJP while inaugurating two-day session of the Party’s National Executive at New Delhi on Dec 23, 199, reproduced as “BJP to put ‘Honor and Dignity’ back into Public Life”, in BJP Today, Jan 1-15, 1996:5-6.

Westernization as Cultural Imperialism

Another related set of postcolonial responses occurs as the flooding of Western cultural products through satellite T.V., advertising and consumer goods threatens the cultural particularity of such societies.⁹⁰ The entrance and huge success of satellite T.V. and the influence of Western cultural norms through Western imported T.V. shows, music and music videos, advertising, magazines, fashions, etc., despite their popularity, have also created a certain sense of social and cultural insecurity in urban middle-class India. An India Today-ORG-MARG opinion poll shows that 64 % of respondents agreed that the “western way of life was affecting the Indian way of life”. Further, 49% of the respondents were “afraid that western culture might overpower Indian culture”.⁹¹ BJP discourse draws and elaborates on this Western/Indian dichotomy, referring often to this threat to the “Indian way of life” by the decadent, materialist culture of the West. Such contrasts are stark and prolific as in the following two quotes:

“On the strength of the purchased majority in Lok Sabha you want to introduce the culture of consumerism in place of the great culture of this country which places value on ‘Simple living’ and ‘high thinking’.”⁹²

Another article in BJP Today comments on the problem facing post-industrial societies such as the U.S., where economic growth is now seen to be threatened by social decay:

“the decline of family values, particularly in USA, as exemplified (sic) by high divorce rate, million of births out of wedlock, one-parent families and the disturbed childhood of millions of youngsters... This is where the inherent superiority of the Indian social system comes in. With our stable family life, we produce stable integrated men and women who, given the chance, can outshine anybody of Indian scientists, engineers, doctors and

⁹⁰ See Hansen, 1996.

⁹¹ August 18, 1997.

⁹² Murli Manohar Joshi, BJP member of parliament (and one of the top national leaders of the party) in a speech to the Rajya Sabha, 1994, critiquing the Indian government’s decision to sign the GATT agreement, reproduced in “GATT Treaty Ushers in an Exploitative World Order” in BJP Today, May 1-15, 1994: 12.

other professionals in the U.S.A.”⁹³

The danger is when globalization in the form of the bombardment of Western images begins replacing Indian cultural resources, and enfeebles the strength of Indian character. This is of course cultural imperialism at its worst – when young, vulnerable Indian minds embrace these decadent images and the associated practices, and lose a sense of their Indianness.

“No less menacing in the realm of informatics and entertainment is the invasion of our air waves- again in the deceptive name of globalization. The idiot box is lapping up too many foreign programmes specializing in violence and vulgarity. The land of Bharatnatyam had to suffer the indignity of Pepsi’s Michael Jackson.”⁹⁴

Yet, the party also claims the mantle of modernity. If there is a contradiction between the “Indian way of life” and the desire for “modernity”, it can be resolved by disengaging the discourse of modernization from that of Westernization.

“The current globalization and GATT is not modernization - but westernization of Indian life styles, which, in turn, is linked to habits which determine the needs of the people and which, in turn, decide the technology and socio-economic models a nation chooses. The damage which GATT and Globalization would inflict on our cultural and civilizational institutions including family and community living which is practically non-existent in the West, and which has preserved the socio-economic stability of India, is not being adequately realized. This damage cannot be undone. The baneful invasion of the Indian mind - particularly of the young - through the foreign media and T.V. programmes - now Doordarshan too has begun competing with its foreign counterparts - will have far reaching consequences on our nationalhood (sic) itself.”⁹⁵

⁹³ Anonymous author (perhaps editor), “Internationalism cannot displace Nationalism, It can only Complement it,” in BJP Today, July 1-15, 1995.

⁹⁴ K.R. Malkani, “Understanding the BJP”, in BJP Today, June 1-15, 1994: 22. Bharatnatyam is a classical Indian dance form. It is ironic here that the more radical Shiv Sena in Maharashtra heavily promoted Michael Jackson’s performance in a charity concert in Bombay. This did create dissension within the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance in the state.

⁹⁵ Memorandum handed over at Rashtrapati Bhawan (Presidential House) on 14.4.94 by the BJP General Secretary, S. K. L. S., MP. The memorandum is signed by the Party President, Shri L.K. Advani, Opposition Leader in Lok Sabha, Shri A.B. Vajpayee, and Opposition Leader in Rajya Sabha, Shri Sikander Bakht. (1994). Reproduced as “GATT Accord an Unmitigated Disaster for the Country”, in BJP

In other words, it is important to emphasize that India can and needs to be “modern” and this assertion occurs repeatedly in BJP discourse. Modernity is after all a post-colonial desire that is not easily dismissed, notwithstanding all the apprehensions and ambivalences it raises. The ability to be modern by drawing on Indian heritage and culture (which as I will show in the next chapter becomes “the ancient glory of the Hindu past”) is what the BJP offers to assuage some of those apprehensions and ambivalences. The theme of Swadeshi provides the discursive resources to make those connections. Without rejecting the modernization implicit in liberalization, given that the urban middle classes stand to benefit the most from it, national identity articulated through Swadeshi becomes the site through which the contradictions of that vision are partially resolved.

“The Party is pledged to build up India as a strong and prosperous nation, which is modern, progressive and enlightened in outlook and which proudly draws inspiration from India’s ancient culture and values and thus is able to emerge as a great world power playing an effective role in the comity of nations for the establishment of world peace and a just international order.”⁹⁶

In general, the opening up of India’s economy is experienced also as a loss of economic, political and cultural autonomy. In this general sense of the fear of external infringement of cultural and political space, the Hindu nationalist articulation of economic prosperity with a strong and proud nation, through the theme of Swadeshi, takes on a certain resonance. The argument that I have made is that the general sense of cultural dislocation caused by liberalization provides the conditions of possibility for such discourses of national pride. The promise of national pride - to ensure India’s true potential and rightful place among the great strong and modern nations of the world - play

Today, April 16-30, 1994: 4-7.

quite well into these insecurities. It enables a discourse on the integrity and unity of the India (Hindu) nation to take on a renewed salience.⁹⁷ Hence BJP discourse based on a unifying and coherent national ideology of Hindutva resonates quite well with the Hindu middle classes. The next chapter looks at how the attempt to recuperate this lost pride in the modern world occurs through the attempt to recover the ‘authenticity’ of India’s Hindu past as a glorious golden age of plenty and prosperity not simply vis-a-vis a degenerate, materialist West (that nevertheless has to be emulated), but through an othering of Islam and India’s Muslim minorities. The previous chapter laid out some of the orientalist symbolic resources through which this cultural nationalism is articulated.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to understand the resurgence of Hindutva politics, by exploring the complicated relationships between the politics of religion, caste and class and how those articulate with changes in the national economy and global political economy. Rather than arguing that the politics of Hindutva is simply an anti-modern, reactionary response to the social dislocations caused by modernization and globalization, I argue that Hindu nationalism makes use of the discontents generated by democracy and liberalization to create a new consensus on dominant caste-class interests. The politicization of marginal caste-class interests, especially as they have emerged as a significant political force through India’s multi-party democratic structure, has positioned the BJP to step into a space created by the Congress inability to “hold together” a variety of caste-class interests through a more inclusive (even if hegemonic) politics. Speaking

⁹⁶ BJP Statement of Objectives, BJP Publication, New Delhi, 1989.

⁹⁷ There are other facets to this discourse on a strong and unified nation that I explore in the next chapter.

in the name of an inclusive 'Hindu identity' (defined in juxtaposition to a 'Muslim other'), the BJP has come to represent the interests of dominant caste-class interests that find the Congress unable to assure their place within the political structure. In that sense, it is the spread and maturing of modern Indian democracy that has created the political conditions of possibility for the emergence of the BJP as a serious political player. These middle-class, upper-caste, urban groups - the largest growing support group for the BJP - are the most clearly supportive of (and in many ways best served by) the liberalization programs of the Indian government since the late 1980s. Hence it is not difficult to understand the BJP's generally enthusiastic reception of economic reforms and foreign capital, even as it can speak persuasively (in its capacity as the "voice of Indian cultural nationalism") to the anxieties, concerns and issues that emerge from India's integration into a global political-economy. In that sense, the BJP is perhaps the best positioned out of all existing political formations in contemporary India, to speak to the Indian desire to "be modern, but in the Indian way".

Chapter Seven

The Construction of Ideological Hegemony: Shifting Meanings of ‘Secularism’ and ‘Nation’

Introduction

The previous chapter looked at the structural conditions that have made possible the emergence and success of contemporary Hindu nationalism, exemplified particularly in the politics of the BJP and the several associated organizations. Drawing on the discussion in Chapter five on the historical construction of religious communities and identities, this chapter lays out the discursive economy of meanings that enables the articulation of ‘*Hindutva*’¹ with the Indian nation and the manner in which it is made to resonate with the ‘common-sense’ of middle-class India. Drawing on the earlier discussion of how the idea and practice of ‘secularism’ in India has remained wedded to the modernist project, in this chapter I look at the existing contemporary understandings of ‘secularism’ and its relation with the Indian ‘nation’, and how Hindu nationalists have drawn on these existing pre-understandings to create new articulations.

The idea of ‘secularism’ has been an integral part of the liberal democratic discourse of post-colonial Indian nationalism, and has served as the ideological anchor for enabling the distinction of ‘tolerant’ India from its authoritarian and religiously intolerant Islamic neighbours in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Hindu nationalist attempt to appropriate this idea of secularism that resonates quite strongly with the self-understandings of middle-class, urban India, and give it quite a novel accent in its own version of ‘Indian secularism’, has been both innovative and effective in its appeal.

¹ Literally, *Hindutva* denotes Hinduness, and is used by Hindu nationalists to refer to the ideology of the movement.

Increasingly a new common-sense is being constructed around what it means to be 'Indian' that disengages the existing articulation between religion and the nation, and draws on an essentialist and very problematic discourse of an inherently tolerant and inclusive Hinduism as the originary foundation of modern India. The chapter argues that the claim of Hindu nationalists to represent a homogenous Hindu community with pre-given interests in the construction of a Hindu India is a hegemonic project that serves particular caste and class interests. The attempt to redefine the idea of 'secularism' is an attempt to create a consensus around this hegemonic vision, subordinating competing claims to identity under an overarching and particularistic Hindu/Indian identity.

Indian Secularism

At the time of independence in 1947, the Indian state under the leadership of prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru officially adopted 'secularism' as part of its constitutional framework. The idea of secularism and its relevance in the Indian context has been much debated and contested right from the start. Leaving aside the question of the universality of secularism for the moment, let us see what resonances the idea has had in the Indian context. In other words, whether or not secularism can be accepted as a universal principle, it is generally agreed in India that the concept takes on culturally and historically specific expressions, so that it is possible to talk of something unique and particular, called "Indian secularism".² The contestation then is over "What is Indian Secularism?"

It is important to point out here that to talk of something called 'Indian secularism' is not to argue that the Indian meaning of the term is innocent of its Western

genealogies, or that modernizing elites in India no longer find its reference in a Western discourse on modernity. It is true as Chatterjee points out, that the “(c)ontinuing use of the term secularism is...an expression of the desire of the modernizing elite to see the “original” meaning of the concept actualized in India”.³ In many ways, the use of neologisms like ‘Indian secularism’ reflects the ambivalences of an imitative nationalist discourse that simultaneously attempts to stake out its unique historical significance.⁴ But regardless of its genealogy, it still remains the case that in the half-century of post-colonial Indian nationalism, the idea of secularism has been successfully articulated to the Indian ‘nation’ within a liberal democratic discursive framework, from which its disarticulation becomes difficult at best and politically futile at worst. Hence even Hindu nationalists, as I will argue below, have had to stake their claim to (Indian) secularism, even as they have re-articulated its meaning in relation to the Indian nation.

There have been at least two competing versions of Indian secularism, both of which are appropriated and articulated in different ways by different groups. In general it is believed that the Nehruvian version of Indian secularism borrowed quite heavily from modernist Western conceptions, while the Gandhian version is truer to more ‘traditional’ Indian understandings.⁵ Even though this distinction between the two versions is

² Madan T.N., “Whither Indian Secularism”, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 27,3. 1993:667-697

³ Partha Chatterjee, “Religious Minorities and the Secular State: Reflections on an Indian Impasse”, in *Public Culture*. 1995, 8: 11-39; pp 13-15.

⁴ Sankaran Krishna, “Inscribing the Nation: Nehru and the Politics of Identity in India”. in Stephen J. Rosow, Naeem Inayatullah & Mark Rupert (ed.), *The Global Economy as Political Space*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder. 1994; pp 195.

⁵ Upadhyaya argues that Gandhi and Nehru were largely similar with respect to their position on secularism, and that Gandhi also borrows heavily from Western philosophies, much like Nehru. (See Prakash Chandra Upadhyaya, “The Politics of Indian Secularism”, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 26,4 . 1992: 815-853.) While it is true that Gandhi’s own philosophical outlook must have been informed by Western ideas, especially given his educational background, it seems to me that the distinction between a Nehruvian and a Gandhian version of Indian secularism is an important one and the tensions between the two quite

somewhat problematic since it suggests a distinct conceptual coherence and clear demarcation between the two that does not exist, I use these two versions as heuristic devices to understand both the existing set of pre-understandings and the particular intervention that the BJP makes on the issue of secularism. The use of this device is also legitimated at least partially since, as will become clear below, the distinction does inform the BJP's own self-understanding of Indian secularism and its own position on the same. I begin by discussing both these conceptions and their expressions in Indian politics. Then I argue how the Hindu nationalist discourse appropriates these versions and rearticulates it in a particular manner. In the second part of the chapter, I show how the secularist vision of this discourse is articulated to an accompanying discourse on the Indian 'nation' that depends on interpellating the Hindu community in a particular manner and claiming to speak in the name of this homogenous community with certain self-evident common interests.

Nehruvian Secularism, the State and the Indian Constitution: The Contradictions of a Liberal Polity

The first version of Indian secularism is the one more explicitly and closely aligned to a modernist Western conception and is associated with Nehru who was one of its most articulate advocates. This is the version that was adopted as the official Indian version and was made part of the Indian Constitution. But even this version was subject to its own ambivalences on how exactly the state should be positioned with respect to religion. Nehru's position was that religious pluralism in a liberal framework was the

useful for understanding post-colonial Indian politics. Further, the analogy that Upadhyaya draws between Gandhi and British conservative philosopher Edmund Burke seems quite forced and problematic to me.

only guarantor of peace and stability in a multi-religious society such as India. In the classical liberal version, religion, which belongs to the realm of the private, should be separate from the sphere of politics, and the state should be neutral with respect to religious issues. In the Indian context, this has been called *Dharma Nirpekshita* or religious neutrality. Nehru's own discomfort with popular religion, in particular with what he saw as the pervasiveness of 'superstition' and 'dogma', his misgivings about Gandhi's explicit invocation of religion in politics, and his intellectual background in both Western liberalism and Marxism informed his pessimistic outlook on the place of religion in a modernizing society. Even though somewhat sympathetic to the spiritual/moral aspects of religion in the lives of Indians, he was quite explicit that religious issues were marginal to the central and primary issues confronting the Indian nation at the time of independence, which were economic and developmental issues.⁶

But more importantly, what was unproblematically private about religion, and hence outside the purview of state intervention is always a difficult issue, and this was reflected quite clearly in the Indian context. The difficulty was related to the issue of the protection of individual rights as well as community rights in a liberal polity. How does one draw the boundaries between legitimate religious practices and the rights of individuals, in a context in which they could be potentially contradictory? As a liberal modernist, Nehru was deeply disturbed about religious practices which he saw as infringing on individual rights, and this pulled him in the direction of a reformist state. However, a state that is completely neutral with respect to religious issues cannot play

⁶ In his various writings, he often reduced religious conflicts to economics, and interpreted demands by minority communities as demands for jobs. (Bhikhu Parekh, "Nehru and the National Philosophy of India", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5-12 January, 1991: pp 37) In that sense, and in keeping with

this reformist role. Hence, if the state was to have a role to play with religious issues and religious communities, the principle on which secularism rests had to be somewhat reworked. It is this reworking that is reflected in the conceptualization of secularism in the Indian Constitution as *Sarva Dharma Samabhava* or the equal respect for all religions. In other words, while the state was not to be tied to any particular religion, and since it could not be neutral with respect to religion, it was to have an equal relationship with all religions, in terms of amount of patronage conferred or distance maintained.

But it is in delineating these relationships that the problems start manifesting themselves. In other words, what is the basis for the recognition of religions and religious communities?⁷ What constitutes equality of patronage or distance? But much more significantly, how does one resolve questions of power in a liberal democracy where (religious) 'majority' and 'minorities' are part of the existing 'real' configuration of social forces, and where such issues hold a certain salience in light of the history and violence of religious communalism, and in particular the experience of post-colonial partition?

It is these issues and the attempts to resolve them in however problematic a way that are reflected in the numerous contradictions in the Constitution with respect to religious rights . It is also these same contradictions that provide the spaces for the rearticulation of secularism that Hindu nationalism effects. The contradictions reflect the compromise worked out given the wide disagreements among the members of the

the argument of chapter two, Nehru's position could be classified as falling under the 'modernization paradigm'.

⁷ That this is not a settled question is reflected in the attempt by the Ramakrishna Mission (considered to be particular Hindu sect) to gain the status of a minority religion quite recently. This also was partially a product of the politics of contemporary secularism which I will focus on below.

Constituent Assembly⁸ on the proper place of religion in Indian political life.⁹ The Indian Constitution embodies various Articles that decree freedom of religion, but the ambivalence about the role that the state should play with respect to religious issues shows up in various forms. This is reflected for instance in the constitutional provision that allows an individual not just to profess and practice ones religion, but also engage in its propagation, and on the issue of religious instruction in schools which is prohibited in educational institutions wholly funded through state funds, but allowed in state aided and state recognized institutions. But the most serious, and the one most prominently politicized issue by the BJP, is in the delicate and controversial area of ‘personal law’, an area that best reflects the problematic compromise worked out on the issue of secularism in the constitution.¹⁰

Nehru strongly supported and pushed for the Hindu Code Bill introduced by Ambedkar, inspite of strong opposition from conservative Hindu leaders who had the tacit support of the President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad.¹¹ It is here that the reformist ideal of the liberal state manifests itself mostly clearly. The Hindu Code Bill created the

⁸ The body that drafted the Constitution.

⁹ This disagreement was reflected in the omission of the word ‘secular’ or ‘secularism’ from the Preamble to the Constitution to describe the character of the new Republic, as well as from the body of the Constitution. It was only under the Emergency rule of Indira Gandhi in 1976 that the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution added the word ‘secular’ (and ‘socialist’) to the Preamble, thus changing “Sovereign Democratic Republic” to “Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic”.

¹⁰ Personal laws pertain mostly to marriage and inheritance issues. Implicit in this process of course is the attempt to demarcate the personal or the private from the public, and it is the gender dimensions of this issue that have often been the most interesting, as in the Shah Bano case discussed in chapter five.

¹¹ It was due to this opposition that it took 6 years to pass the Bill in its entirety, and included the Hindu Marriage act, 1955, the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956. In addition Article 17 abolished the practice of untouchability. The Hindu Code Bill legalized intercaste marriage, legalized divorce, provided daughters the same inheritance rights as sons, and allowed adoption of daughters as well as sons. The grounds for opposition to the Bill were both a resistance to what was seen as a desacralization of religious issues and a perceived bias against Hinduism. It should be pointed out here that the demand for the prohibition of cow slaughter from powerful (upper caste) Hindu interests was accommodated in Article 48, even though it was given a secular, scientific character in its wording. Article

conditions for a 'reformed' Hinduism through the direct intervention of the state in matters related to Hindu practices, governing the Hindu family system, marriage, divorce, and inheritance issues. Objections were raised at the time that this set of measures compromised Indian secularism in that the state was violating the tenet of 'religious neutrality' by encroaching on the right to religious freedom. But more significantly, it was the compromise of Indian secularism on the principle of 'equal respect for all religions' that was more controversial and has continued to carry the political weight of Hindu nationalist critique. The grounds for that controversy was that similar constitutional provisions were not made for minority religions, allowing minority communities to practice their own religious laws, with the expectation embodied in the Directive Principles of the Constitution to evolve a uniform civil code over time across all religions.¹² Here of course, the principle of formal equality is directly compromised, but brings up quite clearly the difficult issue of how equality is to be interpreted in the context of existing relations of unequal power.

The reasons for Nehru's resistance to creating a uniform civil code applying to all religions are probably complex, but clearly reflect at least his recognition of issues of power in the difficult communalised situation of post-partition India. Nehru seemed to be conscious of the special responsibility a majority community plays in a multi-religious society to uphold the ideal of pluralist, liberal secularism.

48 has also been somewhat controversial, and has also been further politicized by the BJP more recently as will be discussed later.

¹² Article 44 of the directive principles provides that the state shall endeavour to secure for all citizens of India a 'uniform civil code' – or a civil code that will apply uniformly to members of all religious communities. The issue of a uniform civil code will come up several times in the latter part of the chapter.

“...by virtue of numbers and in other ways, (the majority community) is the dominant community and it is its responsibility not to use its position in any way which prejudice our secular ideals”.¹³

There are times when Nehru points to the pragmatic necessity of his actions when in an interview on the issue he states that despite his desire to the contrary, “wisdom” hinders the adoption of a uniform civil code at the time.

“I do not think that at the present moment the time is ripe in India for me to push it through. I want to prepare the ground for it and this kind of thing is one method of preparing the ground”.¹⁴

But perhaps more problematically, his ability to speak for the Hindu community does betray to an extent Nehru’s own identity as a Hindu leader. Bhikhu Parekh makes the observation that “Nehru’s state acted as, and claimed all the rights of a Hindu state in its relation to the Hindus...because he and his colleagues were and thought of themselves as Hindus...they (thus) both dared take liberties with the Hindus and dared not take them with respect to the Muslims and even Sikhs”.¹⁵ It can perhaps be argued that Nehru shared the belief, common among upper-caste Hindu leaders of his time, that the open and tolerant nature of Hinduism and the earlier work of Hindu social reformers created the potential for a ‘liberal’ Hinduism that other ‘backward’ religions, particularly Islam, did not share.

Whatever might have been Nehru’s own motivations, the issue that arises here is the question of how the cultural rights of minority communities are to be preserved and protected in a liberal polity based on individual rights, given that the homogenization

¹³ “Nehru’s letter to PCC Presidents, 5 August 1954, in the “Letters to PCC Presidents””, New Delhi, 1955, pp 19-2, from , Prakash Chandra Upadhyaya, “The Politics of Indian Secularism”, in Modern Asian Studies 26,4 . 1992: 815-853; pp 828.

¹⁴ In Times of India, September 16, 1954 from P.B Gajendragadkar., Secularism and the Constitution of India. University of Bombay, Bombay, 1971.

project of the liberal nation often results in suppressing or marginalizing minority cultures, while reflecting the interests of the dominant culture.¹⁶ This of course is not an issue typical of India, but exercises contemporary liberal theory considerably in the West with respect to the issue of multiculturalism.¹⁷ But in India it takes its own specific expressions, and has charged the political sphere quite strongly in the present. That Indian nationalism has had a Hindu accent, even in the secular garb of the Congress both in its nationalist and post-colonial governing phase, cannot be disputed. During the nationalist phase and in the early post-independence phase, the association of Congress leaders such as Vallabhbhai Patel and Puroshottamdas Tandon with the Hindu militant Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), as well as the relationship between the Congress party and powerful Hindu groups such as the Hindu Mahasabha, compromised Congress secularism and always made the avowed secularism of Congress quite suspect in the eyes of Muslim leaders and others. The influence of Hindu conservatives was reflected in some of the compromises worked out, such as the acceptance of Hindi as the national language to be written in the Devanagari script, rather than the Urdu script as well. The prohibition of cow slaughter in most parts of the country also reflected this Brahmanical Hindu influence.¹⁸ The use of Hindu idioms by Congress leaders, particularly Gandhi (*Ram Rajya, Satya, Ahimsa*) also imparted it a Hindu character, at least in appearance. This Hindu 'bias' was seized upon by the Muslim League, and its leader Mohammad Ali

¹⁵ Bhikhu Parekh, "Nehru and the National Philosophy of India", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5-12 January, 1991; pp 42.

¹⁶ See Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Religion*. Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. 1993, for a more general discussion of this issue and Partha Chatterjee, "Religious Minorities and the Secular State: Reflections on an Indian Impasse", in *Public Culture*. 1995, 8: 11-39 for an excellent discussion of this issue in the Indian case.

¹⁷ See especially Amy Gutman (ed.) *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994.

Jinnah, in its demand for separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims, and eventually in the demand for Pakistan. Jinnah was able to secure much political mileage by presenting the Congress as a Hindu organization, and Gandhi as a leader of the Hindu community.¹⁹

But the compromise worked out did recognize, at least legally, the minority status of non-Hindu minorities and the right to religious culture of such minorities. What surfaces here are of course the necessary contradictions of such a compromise. What are the boundaries and limits of such collective rights, in particular with respect to individual members within such communities? Who speaks for the rights of the community, and what dynamics of power and hierarchy does such representational authority reflect? That these are contradictions of a liberal compromise that can be politicized to its own advantage by both members of minority communities and by majority nationalists is evidenced quite clearly in the Shah Bano case as illustrated in chapter five.²⁰

¹⁸ See Ilaiah Kancha, "Beef, BJP and Food Rights of People", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 15, 1996: 1444-1445 for how the prohibition of beef does not reflect the eating practices of lower castes.

¹⁹ The BJP now uses this to its own advantage. In the words of BJP leader, L.K. Advani, "Indian nationalism is rooted, as was India's freedom struggle against colonialism, in a Hindu ethos. It was Gandhiji who projected Ramrajya as the goal of the freedom movement. He was criticized by the Muslim League as being an exponent of Hindu raj. The League did not relish the chanting of Ram dhun (tune) when at Gandhiji's meetings or his insistence on *goraksha* (cow-protection). The League, at one of its annual sessions, passed a formal resolution denouncing Vande Mataram as "idolatrous." All this never made leaders of the freedom struggle apologetic about the fountainhead of their inspiration." (L.K Advani, "BJP is unequivocally committed to secularism", in *Speeches on Ayodhya Issue*, Bharatiya Janata Party Publication No. 122, Central Office, New Delhi; pp 43.) I will talk more about the problematic appropriation of Mahatma Gandhi by the BJP later in this chapter.

²⁰ In chapter five I also showed how the very demarcation of these majority and minority religious communities has implicated the post-colonial Indian state in patterns and strategies of governance that have created contradictory spaces for Hindu nationalist politics. In particular, I looked at the manner in which the Congress(I), especially under the later phase of the leadership of Indira Gandhi, and then Rajiv Gandhi, accentuated the communal character of the party and the state, often making use of contradictions in the Constitution.

Gandhian Secularism

There has been another undercurrent of Indian secularism that has informed Indian politics in more informal and subtle ways, but that is now re-entering the Indian political debate in new, interesting, and sometimes quite disturbing ways. The Gandhian version of Indian secularism²¹ recognizes the impossibility of separating religion and politics in the Indian context, and instead attempts to recover the 'religious spirit' as the spirit of toleration and accommodation. In the Gandhian version, the neutrality of politics and the state from issues of religion does not make sense, given that religion infuses all aspects of Indian social life. Politics does not stand separate from religion, but as a subordinated aspect of it.

The Gandhian version of Indian secularism can and has been interpreted in different ways, especially regarding the role of the state with respect to religious issues. T.N.Madan claims that Gandhian secularism translates into a non-interventionary state, so that the problems with contemporary Indian secularism would, according to a Gandhian, be that "the state is too much with us, because it intrudes into areas of life

²¹ Nandy calls Gandhi an "anti-secularist", and criticizes those who, embarrassed by Gandhi's religiosity, try to project him as a modernist who merely used religion to mobilize the masses in the nationalist struggle. Nandy points to Gandhi's anti-modernist stance as fundamental to his attitude toward religious tolerance. See Ashis Nandy, "The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance", in Veena Das (ed.), *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. 1990. Others have pointed to the modernist influences in Gandhi's thinking. See for instance, Peter van der Veer, "The Foreign Hand: Orientalist Discourse in Sociology and Communalism", in Carol A. Breckenridge Carol A. and Peter van der Veer (ed.), *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspective on South Asia*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. 1993. I want to make a distinction here between Gandhi's own understanding of secularism which would require a close textual analysis of Gandhi's voluminous writings on religion and politics, and a 'Gandhian secularism' that is informed by Gandhi's ideas but produces different discourses on secularism. I argue later that the BJP does appropriate one version of Gandhian secularism. One example of shared, but differently appropriated genealogies is that Hindu spiritual leader Vivekananda's writings that inspired Gandhi's position on non-violence and tolerance, has also inspired Hindu nationalists such as Swami Chinmayananda, founder of VHP, an organization not known for either non-violence or tolerance. However, I do believe as I will point to later in the chapter that the BJP discourse on secularism goes against the very spirit of Gandhi's ideas. For more on Gandhi's views on secularism, see Bhikhu Parekh, *Gandhi*, Oxford University Press, Oxford,

where it has no business even to peep”.²² Gandhi, in this interpretation, was against the idea of a state religion or state support of any religion, and believed that religious practice was a personal and private matter, outside the jurisdiction of the state.²³

In a different version of Gandhian secularism, an active promotion of respect for all religions, rather than a dissociation of the state from religion, was seen as crucial to preserving religious harmony in India. In this interpretation, “tolerance and respect for religious pluralism should be encouraged by the state because different faiths represent different paths to the same absolute and universal truth”.²⁴ Allen problematizes this formulation of secularism as deriving from a Hindu philosophical tradition (although he doesn’t hold this charge up to Gandhi specifically), also exemplified in the work of Indian philosopher and later president of India, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, which sees religious pluralism as an imperfect expression of a single, perfect, eternal truth. Hence, in appropriating Christ and Mohammed as divine incarnations (*avatars*) in a larger pantheon of Hindu avatars, this form of secularism fails to accept other religions on their own terms.²⁵ Sometimes this assumed overlap between the ideal of secularism and the tenets of Hinduism are accepted unproblematically, as in the following quote:

“Indian secularism subscribes to the Hindu philosophical tenet that all religions have elements of truth and no religion can claim the monopoly of truth. From ancient times, Hindu philosophers have consistently

1997; and Bhiku Parekh, Gandhi's Political Philosophy: A Critical Examination, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, 1989.

²² T.N. Madan, “Whither Indian Secularism”, in Modern Asian Studies, 27,3. 1993:667-697; pp 676.

²³ While this might seem similar to the separation of the private and the public as in a liberal framework, Gandhi, who always spoke from the concreteness of Indian political life, would dismiss any such separation as wholly artificial and inadequate. As Madan points out, Gandhi laid great store in the moral character of the individual, so that the nature of the state depended fundamentally on the moral fiber and responsibility of the citizen. (Madan, *ibid*) For Gandhi, religion and religious values shaped this moral character and hence created a moral citizen.

²⁴ Allen Douglas, "Introduction" in Allen Douglas (ed.), Religion and Political Conflict in South Asia: India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Greenwood Press, Westport. 1992; pp 8.

²⁵ Douglas, *ibid*.

proclaimed that all religions lead to God, and, unlike some other religions, Hinduism has never put forth the claim that it alone is the true religion. The spirit of toleration is the foundation of the theory of secularism.”²⁶

As might be obvious, this interpretation of Indian secularism becomes problematic when looked at from the perspective of minority religions (as well as lower caste groups) that have not always had a necessarily harmonious and compatible relationship with the tenets of Hinduism. Even though Gandhi himself often claimed to speak as a Hindu and spoke of the religious tolerance of Hinduism, it is questionable that Gandhi’s own understanding of Indian secularism would conflate it with Hinduism in this manner.

These two versions of Gandhian secularism have entered the present Indian political debate on the relationship of religion and politics from two different (and politically opposed) directions. On the one hand, as I elaborate on later in this chapter, it is the second interpretation of Gandhian secularism that can and has been articulated in a very problematic and exclusivist manner by the BJP in its discourse on Indian secularism, sometimes invoking Gandhi as a Hindu leader. The state in this version should be informed by religion, i.e. Hinduism (interpreted in a particular manner, of course). On the other hand, Indian scholars such as Ashis Nandy and T.N. Madan have found the problems with Indian secularism in the presence of a strong, technocratic and interventionary state and have advocated something along the lines of the first version of Gandhian secularism in recuperating what are seen as the inherently tolerant, syncretistic (and ultimately authentic) folk religions of India. It is important to point out here that the politics of these two positions is significantly different. While critical of the normalizing

²⁶ P.B.Gajendragadkar, *The Constitution of India: Philosophy and Basic Postulates*. Oxford University Press, Nairobi. 1969; pp 40, (my italics).

and disciplining thrusts of the modern secular state, the latter position sees the former as a reactionary, and inauthentic revivalist source of resistance with potentially dangerous implications.²⁷ But what ties these versions together is their critique of Nehruvian secularism and their claim to an essence of Hinduism as tolerant and pluralistic.²⁸

The Rearticulation of ‘Secularism’ in Hindu Nationalist Ideology

There is a certain ambivalence now associated with the word ‘secular’, and that in a sense shows an instability in the category itself and a flux in its meaning. On the one hand, ‘secular’ is becoming a word of derision, evoking both Westernized, elitist moorings and a bias toward religious minorities, particularly Muslims. The former evokes anti-colonial sentiments about the irrelevance of alien ideas to the Indian context, and forms part of the Hindu Right project of recovering ‘authentic (read Hindu) roots’.

²⁷ Nandy makes the point that the revivalist or fundamentalist response is another form of Westernization, with appeals mostly to the middle class, and is a byproduct and pathology of modernity. Hindu nationalist ideology as codified in the RSS worldview draws upon a semiticized Hindu reform movement that emerged under colonialism. This revivalist movement attempted to create a classical Vedantic faith in the image of Christianity and Islam, by ‘decontaminating’ Hinduism of the very folk elements that gave it a measure of tolerance and flexibility. See Ashis Nandy, “The Politics of Secularism and the Recovery of Religious Tolerance”, in Veena Das (ed.), *Mirrors of Violence: Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990 and also chapter five for more on this point. While I agree with the spirit of Nandy’s desire to reclaim the tolerant aspects of Hinduism, I find his discussion of the ‘authenticity’ and ‘inauthenticity’ of religion problematic. To the extent that religion and religious identity are socially constructed, I find it difficult to conceptualize different religious formations as accurate or inaccurate copies of some originary religious foundation. While one might disagree with the politics of Hindu nationalism, I believe that it is reflective of one particular interpretation of religious community as are several other interpretations. However, it might be possible to use “Hindu tolerance” as a form of ‘strategic essentialism’ in the political opposition to the politics of Hindutva. (I draw this idea from Gayatri Spivak’s discussion of using sex/gender as a form strategic essentialism for political struggles; see Gayatri Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*. Routledge, New York, 1987)

²⁸ Nandy has made a distinction between religion as “ideology” as expressed by Hindutva politics and religion as a “faith and a way of life” that need to be recuperated. In the same vein, Madan has called for Indians to “overcome our distrust of Indian indigenous traditions”. (T.N. Madan, “Whither Indian Secularism”, in *Modern Asian Studies*, 27,3. 1993: pp 696) I am certainly uncomfortable with claims like the ones being made by Nandy and Madan that there is a primordial, folk India that has been and remains syncretistic and tolerant in its *essence*, untouched by modernity. But my argument is not that Hindus and Muslims have always had conflictual (or peaceful) relations historically. Rather, I am arguing that relations

The latter becomes charged with the supposed proclivity of Indian intellectuals and politicians for “pandering” or “appeasing” minorities, engaging in what is called “minorityism”, and is named as “pseudo-secularism”. On the other hand, the word ‘secularism’ continues to have certain positive connotations that gives it a particular resonance in the Indian political idiom. The symbolic power associated with the word ‘secularism’ in the Indian imagination comes from its place in the liberal democratic discourse, and its association with the values of social justice and the right to equality means that it cannot be repudiated entirely. Hence, even the BJP is forced to lay claim to the label, presenting itself as the truly secular party. This claim to what is called “positive secularism” is made on the grounds that Hinduism is the only Indian religious discourse that is innately tolerant and open to religious differences.

In making the claim that ‘Hindu secularism’ is the only true form of secularism, and all other versions of it are ‘pseudo secularisms’, the BJP is appropriating a particular interpretation of the Gandhian version of secularism, juxtaposing it against the Nehruvian version (making explicit its links to the Western tradition, and to Westernized elites who speak in its name), and re-articulating it explicitly to Hinduism as the only religion of tolerance and accommodation and hence the only legitimate basis for grounding Indian secularism. Below I elaborate on the process through which this happens. This rearticulation taps into a larger common-sense among middle and upper class Hindus in India that Hinduism is a more democratic, pluralistic and tolerant religion in its essence and its practices, in contrast to the ‘fundamentalism’ and ‘fanaticism’ that are associated with Islam as a religion and Muslim practices and politics in India.

of conflict are not any more ‘natural’ than relations of tolerance, but have to be investigated in particular socio-historic contexts as emerging from particular social relations.

The Rejection of Nehruvian Secularism

“A citizen can live with corruption; he has done so for decades. But can a citizen live without a sense of identity? By the continued insistence on “secularism” whatever that meant – the Congress has deprived the average Hindu of his sense of identity. If he was not a Hindu, then who or what was he? Both the Shiv Sena and the BJP did not make people feel ashamed of being Hindu. Can it be that the voter, after five decades of secularism was finally asserting his Hinduness by voting for the Shiv Sena and the BJP?²⁹

The tradition/modernity dichotomy provides the ideological structuring scheme for the BJP’s rejection of Nehruvian secularism and its attempt to recover ‘authenticity’ via a Gandhian version of secularism. That Nehru and his like-minded colleagues were Westernized elites, alienated from their cultural roots serves to delegitimize Nehruvian secularism as a framework for Indian reality.³⁰ As stated by well-known journalist turned Hindu ideologue, the late Girilal Jain, these elites wanted to “remake India in the Western image”, and the so-called secular nationalist ideology was “a euphemism for irrelegion and repudiation of the Hindu ethos”.³¹ Or in the words of BJP leader Advani, “(f)or the Left-inclined, secularism has become a euphemism to cloak their intense allergy to

²⁹ M.V. Kamath, “The Resurgence of the BJP”, in BJP Today, May 1-15, 1995; 8-10.

³⁰ Even though often there are explicit statements criticizing Nehru and his vision of secularism, there are also occasional attempts to dilute this harshness toward such a prominent national leader. For instance, Vajpayee, in a lecture on Secularism on All India Radio, discusses how Nehru in his later years recognized the limitations of the *Dharmanirpeksha* (religiously neutral) state and supported *the Sarva Dharma Sambhava* (equal respect for all religions) version of secularism, and in doing so demonstrated his deep commitment to the “old Indian tradition of spirituality”. (Atal Bihari Vajpayee, “Secularism: the Indian Concept”, Dr Rajendra Prasad Lecture organized by All India Radio on December 2&3, 1992, Bharatiya Janata Party Publication No. 124, Central Office, New Delhi; see pps 15-17) As is much more apparent in the case of Mahatma Gandhi, which I will point out below, while the BJP discourse on Indian secularism positions itself with respect to particular interpretations of Nehruvian and Gandhian secularism, the stands it takes with respect to the personae or figures of Nehru and Gandhi is much more ambivalent.

³¹ Girilal Jain, “A Turning Point in History”, Manthan, Vol 13, No. 1-2, May-June, 1991, pp 20-23.

religion, and more particularly, to Hinduism.”³² That this “repudiation of the Hindu ethos” is seen to arise from a contempt for their Hindu heritage is offered as evidence of their uncritical acceptance of modernity and rejection of tradition, and it is this that the BJP seeks to counter, as in the popular slogan - *Garva se kaho hum Hindu hain* (Proudly proclaim that we are Hindus). This criticism surely has some teeth, bolstered in contemporary politics by the widespread presence in Indian politics of monolingual, upper-class English-speaking intellectuals, bureaucrats and some politicians (symbolized most effectively in the personae of Rajiv Gandhi) whose social distance from most Indians is perhaps only too visible.³³ As the quote at the start of this section points out, the idea is that Nehruvian secularism has robbed the average Indian of his sense of authentic identity, which the BJP is attempting to recuperate through Hindutva. The following quote attempts to point to the irony of this Westernization, drawing at the same time on the “otherness” of the West.

“While our P.M. has been obsessed with separating religion from politics, the US President has been going overtly religious. The latter has

³² L.K Advani, “BJP is unequivocally committed to secularism”, in *Speeches on Ayodhya Issue*, Bharatiya Janata Party Publication No. 122, Central Office, New Delhi; pp 43. An article in the Indian daily, *Indian Express*, that is not wholly supportive of the BJP itself, however accepts this idea that the BJP represents the voice of a suppressed, but authentic nation against the “Western hegemony” represented in the rule of other parties. Dismissing the Congress led national movement and the Communist social movements as “by-products of Westernization” that were “anti-colonial in politics but pro-colonial through and through in culture”, the author makes an optimistic prediction for the BJP’s success in the future “because it represents, in however crude a form, the essentially medieval pre-colonial native spirit which is likely to assert itself against the pro-Western and pro-Islamic forces.” (M.G.S. Narayanan, “Giant Strides by Hindutva” from *The Indian Express*, June 26, 1996 as reproduced in *BJP Today*, July 16-31, 1996; pp 13-14. This is important because it reflects to an extent the emerging common-sense about what the BJP represents and why that is valuable.

³³ Romesh Diwan, a regular contributor to *BJP Today*, and a Non-Resident Indian (NRI) living in the U.S., has coined the term Resident Non-Indian (RNI) and uses it quite frequently to describe the English speaking elite class that lives in India, but is Westernized and alienated from Indian cultural values. But it is telling that the term in his articles is used more often to categorize all parties and people who do not subscribe to BJP ideology. Borrowing an evocative phrase from Franz Fanon, Diwan calls the RNI elite, “Brown faces in Western masks”. Diwan explicitly situates Nehru within the RNI camp and claims Gandhi as a Hindu nationalist leader. (See for example, Romesh Diwan, “Muslim & British Rule & Hindu Psyche” in *BJP Today*, June 16-30, 1996 and Romesh Diwan, “Gandhiji knew this – and was sad” in *BJP Today*, Sept 1-15, 1996.)

discovered that only religion can “heal the land”. Only religion, he says, can restore “family values” in that much-divorcing country.”³⁴

However, if Nehruvian Secularism is alien, it is not self-evident in the BJP formulation, because the ideal of secularism is not bad in itself but in how it has functioned, and it has functioned as “pseudo-secularism”. Advani classifies such “pseudo-secularists” into two groups.

“There are those who basically subscribe to the Marxist view that religion is the “opium of the masses”. For them only an irreligious state can be truly secular. The second and larger group, mainly of politicians, is that for whom secularism is only a euphemism for vote-bank politics. They are not concerned with the welfare of these so-called minorities. Their only interest is: the minority vote!”³⁵

It is this latter group that the BJP focuses on. The Nehruvian version of secularism ultimately failed because secularism became “a euphemism for Hindu-baiting”, and “Hindu-bashing became synonymous with secularism”.³⁶ Rather than being neutral with regard to religion or equidistant from all religions, as in the Nehruvian ideal, the state has been biased in favour of minorities, resulting in what is called the politics of “minorityism”.

³⁴ K.R. Malkani, “Letter from the Editor” in BJP Today, April 1-15, 1994; 1. In many ways, the rejection of Nehruvian secularism is a selective rejection of modernity, but one that serves well to ground the BJP’s claim to tradition. The place of the nation-state is fundamental in the Hindu nationalist discourse, as I will elaborate on later in the chapter. Whether the nation-state is an idea imported from the West, and how applicable it might be in non-European contexts is a question that is not even raised, even though there has been much debate on this issue at the scholarly level. While Nehruvian socialism has been somewhat critiqued for its alien origins and the BJP has attempted to provide its own more authentic Indian economic philosophy in the “Integral Humanism” of Deendayal Uppadhyaya (which has certain similarities with Gandhian socialism), in general BJP economic policy, as shown in the previous chapter, particularly since the mid 1980s has been quite enthusiastic in its acceptance of capitalism and foreign capital and very supportive of the economic liberalization program. It is the alienness of ‘secularism’ that takes the most beating in contemporary Hindu nationalist ideology.

³⁵ L.K Advani, “Advani’s Presidential Speech” as reproduced in BJP Today, Nov 16-Dec 15, 1995; pp 9.

³⁶ Interview with BJP leader Advani in the Sunday Hindustan Times Magazine, Jan 19, 1992, pp 2 and Advani, in Sunday Observer, Jan 7, 1991, pp 5, respectively.

“The politics of minority vote-banks has given birth to pseudo-secularism...The national debate on what is genuine secularism – according to the Bharatiya Janata party, it means: “Justice of all – appeasement of none” – must continue and the people must be made more and more conscious of the fact that politics of minorityism practised by our opponents is undermining the unity of the country and simultaneously hurting the interests of the so-called minorities themselves.”³⁷

The claim is that secular politicians in India have manipulated minority religious communities for electoral purposes, treating them as “vote banks”. In this view, “appeasement of minorities” or the “pandering to minorities” for such cynical political purposes not just ignores and neglects the needs and interests of the majority Hindu community, but also puts into question the secular credentials of the Indian state.³⁸ Hence, while the Shah Bano case is often cited as evidence of the ‘appeasement of minorities’, the opening of the locks of the Babri Masjid by Rajiv Gandhi soon after in the light of rising Hindu demands becomes winning the ‘rights’ of Hindus.

Further, this minority bias is effectively a pro-Muslim bias.

“Every country has some kind of minorities or the other. But no country on earth tries to bribe its minorities the way we do it. A pro-Muslim secularism seems to be the “Established Church” in Congress India.”³⁹

At the same time, claiming secular credentials by non-BJP parties here signifies an automatic Islamicist bias. Hence the Left front is projected as the arm of a global Islamic conspiracy, the communist government in West-Bengal is presented as pro-Muslim because it allows the sale of beef, other non-BJP parties such as the Congress and the

³⁷ L.K. Advani, “‘Hindutva’ is the “Ideological Mascot” of BJP” in *BJP Today*, April 1-15, 1994; 4-6.

³⁸ That Muslim Indians still remain socially and economically disadvantaged is rendered invisible in such a formulation. See Aijazudin Ahmad, *Muslims in India: Their Educational, Demographic and Socio-Economic Status with Inter-Community Comparisons based on Field Survey conducted in 1971*, Vol. I-III, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi, 1994 for a compilation and analysis of regionally disaggregated figures and statistics on Indian Muslims.

Janata Dal are dubbed “Babri parties”, and in the ultimate stigmatizing move, anyone opposed to the Hindu nationalist worldview becomes a Muslim as in “Mullah Mulayam” or “Maulana Mulayam” to designate Mulayam Singh Yadav, Janata Dal chief minister of Uttar Pradesh who had been quite hostile to the BJP and to upper caste Hindu interests more generally.⁴⁰ Here rather than being associated with Westernization, the secular is conflated with the Muslim.⁴¹

As chapter five showed, there is no question that Indian politicians, particularly of the Congress party have played the religious card. But it cannot be claimed that only the minority religious communities have been so used. The post-colonial Indian state has always had a Hindu accent, but especially since at least the 1980s, the Congress(I) has also played the ‘Hindu card’ very effectively.

The Appropriation of Gandhian Secularism

“‘Sarva Dharma Sambhava’ is not against any religion. It treats all religions with equal respect. And, therefore, it can be said that the Indian concept of secularism is more positive. It is specially suited to India as followers of different faiths had been living in India since time immemorial, long before the advent of Christianity and Islam.. The translation of the word ‘secular’ as dharmanirpeksha has caused some confusion. Dharmanirpeksha appears somewhat negative. It creates an impression tht it negates something. Secondly, dharmanirpeksha has been taken to mean that it is unconcerned about or indifferent to religions. We

³⁹ K.R. Malkani, “Letter from the Editor” in BJP Today, July 1-15, 1994; 1.

⁴⁰ Mulayam Singh Yadav has also been accused by BJP leaders of aiding Pakistani intelligence agents during his chief ministership and of receiving funds from Muslim countries in the Gulf for himself and his party. (See Sharad Gupta, “BJP accuses Mulayam of aiding Pak agents” in Indian Express, Jan 27, 1996) That this widespread castigating of Mulayam Singh Yadav as a “Messiah of the Muslims” by the BJP brings political mileage is evidenced by the fact that it has led Singh to often make explicit attempts to shed that appearance. (See India Today, October 15, 1993; pp 28)

⁴¹ See Pradeep Dutta and Sumit Sarkar, “Manufacturing Hatred: The Image of the Muslim in the Ramjanamabhumi Movement”, in Arslan Mehdi and Rajan Janaki (eds.), Communalism in India: Challenge and Response. Manohar, New Delhi, 1994, pp 96-97 for more on how this elision between the secular and the Muslim occurs.

should not ignore the fact that the (sic) Indian society is basically oriented to Dharma and has faith in it.”⁴²

The Shah Bano case is one example of evidence offered by the BJP of the “appeasement of minorities”.⁴³ It is considered an outrage that minorities are so “pandered” while the majority receives no benefits from the state. In place of the “pseudo-secularism” of most political parties that draw on the Nehruvian version of secularism, the BJP claims to offer “positive secularism”. The word ‘positive’, as evidenced in the quote above, provides a double ideological move here. On the one hand, it sets the BJP version of secularism against the bad, biased, negative ways that Nehruvian secularism has functioned, so that “positive secularism...stands for ‘Justice for All and Appeasement for None’”.⁴⁴ On the other hand, it connotes a more active role for the state in matters of religious issues as against the preferred non-interference or neutrality of the state in the Nehruvian ideal, and this places it within a Gandhian version of secularism, but with links quite explicitly with Hinduism.

⁴² Atal Bihari Vajpayee, “Secularism: the Indian Concept”, Dr Rajendra Prasad Lecture organized by All India Radio on December 2&3, 1992, Bharatiya Janata Party Publication No. 124, Central Office, New Delhi; pp 15.

⁴³ See chapter five for a discussion of the Shah Bano case. A BJP publication provides a long list of other concessions to Muslims such as “Article 370 and Constitution and Flag for the only Muslim majority State (Jammu & Kashmir) in India” (also discussed in chapter five), “a proclaimed and uncontested statement that the Muslim League and that too in Kerala (where it had a bigamous and alternating political alliance with the Congress and Marxists) is secular”, “the silent acceptance of the right of the Muslims to riot in religious matters like Hazrat Bal, and Al-Aqsa Mosque and even non-religious matters so long as they could be given a religious column – like the hanging of Z.A. Bhutto in Pakistan”, “the banning of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* on the ground that it was liable to offend Muslim sentiments”, “the setting up of a Minorities Commission to please essentially the Muslims”, “the secularist opposition to the Assam movement against infiltrators and the deafening silence of the pseudo-secular parties on the Bangladesh infiltrators who have usurped large tracts in Assam and elsewhere”, among others. (BJP’s White Paper on Ayodhya & the Rama Temple Movement, Bharatiya Janata Party, April 1993; pp 12) See B.P. Singhal, “Muslims have been safest under BJP rule”, in BJP Today, April 16-30, 1996: 20-22 for another long list of examples of Muslim appeasement.

⁴⁴ Bharatiya Janata Party Election Manifesto, Lok Sabha Elections, 1989:6.

The BJP claims that rather than the state being free of religion, the state should be fundamentally informed by religion. Trying to explain why such sharp controversy over secularism has arisen four decades after the framing of the Indian Constitution, Vajpayee points out:

“In principle, it was accepted that the Indian concept of secularism would draw its inspiration from the *Sarva Dharma Sambhava* – equal respect for all religions. It would not be anti-religion. Still, the Government followed such policies and implemented them in such a manner that gave rise to the apprehension that the State wanted to keep away from the (sic) religion and treated it as a hurdle in the way of progress.”⁴⁵

Further, Hinduism is the religion that provides this foundation for India, just as Islam does for Pakistan since 1947 and for Bangladesh since 1988.⁴⁶ However, it is fundamental to this worldview to claim Hinduism less for its religious value and more for its cultural and civilizational resources. As claimed by Hindu nationalist ideologue Sheshadri, “Hindu is not the name of religious faith like the Muslim and the Christian; it denotes the national life here”.⁴⁷ Hence it is important that India shall not be a theocratic state in the manner of Pakistan and Bangladesh, but infact a ‘secular’ state, albeit one in which Hinduism is to provide the foundations for this secularism. It is repeatedly asserted that “...unlike our two neighbouring countries, the BJP has never made a bid for a theocratic state...”⁴⁸, and that “India never was, and never will be, a theocratic state.”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Atal Bihari Vajpayee, “Secularism: the Indian Concept”, Dr Rajendra Prasad Lecture organized by All India Radio on December 2&3, 1992, Bharatiya Janata Party Publication No. 124, Central Office, New Delhi; pp 22.

⁴⁶Created by partition from Pakistan in 1971, it was only on March 17, 1988 that Islam was declared as the official religion of Bangladesh.

⁴⁷ Sheshadri, top-ranking RSS leader, as quoted in Ashutosh Varshney, “Contested Meanings: India’s National Identity, Hindu Nationalism, and the Politics of Anxiety”, in Daedalus, V 122, n 3. Summer 1993: pp 240.

⁴⁸ S.K. Sinha, “For BJP, it is victory after defeat” from the Hindustan Times, June 3, 1996, as reproduced in BJP Today, June 16-30, 1996; 8-10.

⁴⁹ A.B. Vajpayee, “Prime Minister’s Address to the Nation”, delivered on May 15, as reproduced in BJP Today, May 16-June 16, 1996.

But it is made clear that Indian secularism will derive from its Hindu essence, or as in the words of Advani, “The Bharatiya Janata Party also believes that Indian secularism has its roots in Hindutva.”⁵⁰ This is significant, because the *otherness* of Bangladesh and much more significantly Pakistan is fundamental to the Indian self in the moral universe of the Indian people.

“In 1947, even though partition was based on religion, and even though Pakistan declared itself an Islamic State, India opted for secularism. This happened because Indian nationalism has its roots in the age-old culture of this country, which is essentially Hindu. Theocracy is alien to Hindu polity, history and culture. It is significant that Bangladesh which became independent in 1971 with India’s help started off as a secular country but with the passage of time it jettisoned secularism, and became, like Pakistan, an Islamic state.”⁵¹

The existing common-sense in India that Indian secularism is what has made India an open, tolerant polity that has sustained Indian democracy as opposed to the (militaristically) authoritarian and religiously intolerant Islamic regimes in its neighbouring states fires the Indian imagination and is a symbolic resource of Indian nationalism that cannot be easily dismissed. Secularism in a sense is what enables the distinction between the ‘civilized’ and the ‘barbarian’ in this worldview.⁵² Secularism forms an integral part of the liberal democratic discourse, and is articulated with the ideas of progress and justice within this discourse, and this gives it a certain salience, especially

⁵⁰L.K. Advani, “‘Hindutva’ is the ‘Ideological Mascot’ of BJP” in *BJP Today*, April 1-15, 1994; 4-6.

⁵¹L.K. Advani, “Advani’s Presidential Speech” as reproduced in *BJP Today*, Nov 16-Dec 15, 1995; pp 9.

⁵²The existence of Pakistan as the ‘evil other’ is fundamental as the external threat that glues the Indian nation-state. It is common for Indian politicians, and particularly from the BJP, to point to the source of Indian domestic problems in Pakistan, as the infamous ‘foreign hand’ that stirs domestic disturbances, and provides the training ground for terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir. How successful this political strategy is, is questionable since an INDIA TODAY-ORG-MARG opinion poll showed that only 13% of the population believed that the ‘foreign hand’ was responsible for communal tension and violence, while 20% attributed the source to religious heads, and 64% believed politicians responsible. However, the same opinion poll also showed that most people continue to see Pakistan as the traditional adversary, and only

among the middle class in India, which forms the largest support base for the BJP. When Vajpayee says that India will never be a theocratic state because secularism “is integrated into our lives”, it is this middle class ‘sense of self’ that he is drawing on.⁵³

The issue then becomes one of claiming secularism as part of Hinduism. Hence the BJP leadership claims that secularism is natural to Hinduism because it is “impossible for the Hindus to evolve an established church or proclaim a state religion and call upon the state to impose it by force”.⁵⁴ The uniqueness of Hindu/Indian civilization is based on the claim that “religious tradition in India has been remarkably free of taboos or intolerance...”⁵⁵ and that ““Hindu” and “fundamentalist” are contradictory terms.”⁵⁶ In other words, it is the *inherent, innate tolerance* of Hinduism that makes ‘Indian secularism’ possible. In the words of BJP leader Advani:

“India is secular *because* it is essentially Hindu. Theocracy is alien to Hindu tradition and history”.⁵⁷

That this is the “essence” of Hinduism, and that this is what sets it apart from other more intolerant religions, is fundamental to making this claim.

“The semitic faiths powered by hate and intolerance within, and towards ‘infidels’, needed to effect a compromise through secularism between the conflicting spiritual and temporal views. In the Hindu view there is no

28% of the people believe that relations with Pakistan will ever improve, while as many as 46 % believe that would never happen. (See India Today, August 18, 1997)

⁵³ A.B. Vajpayee delivering the Prime Minister’s Address to the Nation on May 15th, 1996, as reproduced in BJP Today, May 16-June 16, 1996: 6-9.

⁵⁴ Interview with Advani, Sunday Hindustan Times Magazine, Jan 19, 1992: 1-22.

⁵⁵ Advani, “Backward March: The Bane of Minorityism”, Statesman Weekly, Oct. 29, 1988: 12.

⁵⁶ Romesh Diwan, “Impoverishment in the name of “liberalisation”: Neo-Colonialism in the name of “globalisation”,” BJP Today, July 16-31, 1995: pp 23.

⁵⁷ L.K. Advani, ““Hindutva’ is the “Ideological Mascot” of BJP” in BJP Today, April 1-15, 1994; 4-6; my italics.

need for a truce between the spiritual and the temporal as, in Hindutva, there is no conflict between the sacred and the secular.”⁵⁸

This in other words is the “nature” of Hinduism.

“...true Hinduism which, in my view, is nothing but a form of spiritual secularism; which believes that God/Truth can be reached through different routes and by diverse means; which adheres to no fixed dogma...”⁵⁹

Note the similarities of the above quote to one particular version of Gandhian secularism discussed above. Advani has claimed that all religious groups in India could be accommodated within Hinduism’s cultural/national umbrella, so that in addition to Hindus, the Indian nation-state would include Mohammadi Hindus, Christian Hindus and Sikh Hindus.⁶⁰ So in order to free themselves of the charge of being ‘outsiders’, religious minorities would have to accept their status as subordinated elements within the Hindu fold. In that vein, Advani advises the Muslims of India to “(t)rust the Hindus, who have made India a secular country...”⁶¹ In all, the basic claim here is that despite the abuse of secularism by the Indian elite, unlike its Islamic neighbours India has been able to remain secular only *because* it is essentially a tolerant and inclusive Hindu country.

But this discourse on Hinduism is not free of ambiguities. Where this tolerance, openness and non-violence are claimed as strengths of Hinduism, in an extraordinary reversal they also become weaknesses that have been exploited by other militant,

⁵⁸ P. Parmeshwaran, “Hindutva & Dialectics: P. Parmeshwaran Answers O.V. Vijayan” from The Indian Express, July 3, 1996 as reproduced in BJP Today, July 16-31, 1996; pp 23.

⁵⁹ Jagmohan, “Supreme Court on Hindutva”, article in the Hindustan Times, Jan 8-9, 1996 as reproduced in BJP Today, Jan 16-31, 1996; 14-17.

⁶⁰ Nandy endorses the idea of all Indians as definitionally Hindus, crypto-Hindus or Hinduised. (Ashis Nandy, “Culture, State and the Rediscovery of Indian Politics”, in Economic and Political Weekly, December 8, 1984: pp 2081)

⁶¹ L.K Advani, “Advani’s Presidential Speech” as reproduced in BJP Today, Nov 16-Dec 15, 1995; pp 9.

aggressive, intolerant religions like Islam in India.⁶² This Hindu weakness in the face of Muslim aggression is attempted to be “proved” through extensive and graphic “documentation” of Muslim atrocities against Hindus.⁶³ Thus the BJP and other Hindu nationalist organizations associated with the BJP, like the RSS and the VHP have advocated militant, aggressive postures in order to rejuvenate an ‘emasculated’ Hinduism, leaving the contradictions of that posture unresolved.⁶⁴

“Great truths were discovered by “the contemplative mystics of the Indo-Gangetic plain” or in the misty Himalayan forests, because the armed Kshatriya warriors were around to assure them safety and security from outside barbarian (sic)...The insistence on internalising strength or the Kshatriya quality in Hindutva as a prerequisite to protect its contemplative genius is at the heart of the current Hindu resurgence...*Without such internalised strength, Hindutva will be an archival virtue in today’s world of might vs right, and not a living reality...*If, as alleged by some secularists, the exponents of Hindutva have become more shrill in recent years, there is solid justification for that. It is in fact the counter-attack of a besieged majority whose legitimate claims were rejected without a hearing and on whom insults were heaped for their only fault of being proud of the Hindu tradition”⁶⁵

⁶² Hindu nationalist groups have expended significant amounts of political energy in creating the image of the Muslim as treacherous, licentious, fanatic and in general evil, sometimes drawing on Orientalist literature on Islam and Muslims. See Pradeep Dutta and Sumit Sarkar, “Manufacturing Hatred: The Image of the Muslim in the Ramjanamabhumi Movement”, in Arslan Mehdi and Rajan Janaki (eds.), *Communalism in India: Challenge and Response*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1994 for an excellent account of the discursive construction of stereotypes about Muslims in the current Hindu nationalist campaign.

⁶³ For instance, VHP Secretary and former BJP member of parliament B.L. Sharma recently planned the construction of a “holocaust museum” that in the words of Sharma “will show the oppression of Hindu masses by the Islamic conquerors and later the British”. Sharma plans to cover 12 centuries “since the first Muslim invasion of Mohammad bin Qasim”, focussing particularly on the horrors “faced only by Hindus” of the Partition of 1947. (from Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, “Toothless Wonder” in *India Today*, December 15, 1997; pp 15) Without going into a discussion of the issue, I would like to point out here the interesting and ironic appropriation of the powerful concept of “the holocaust” to describe the alleged atrocities against the “descendants of Aryans” (*Aryavratha*), in the “land of the Aryans” (*Aryadesh*).

⁶⁴ One example of this posture is the repeated castigation by Sadhvi Rithambara and Uma Bharati (two quite prominent and infamous women VHP/BJP orators) of those Hindus who believe in non-violence as *Hijras* (eunuchs). The ‘gender’ dimension here is particularly striking. For a collection of articles that explores the different ways in which Hindu nationalist discourse and practice is gendered, see Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (ed.), *Women and Right-Wing Movements: Indian Experiences*, Kali for Women, Zed Books Limited, New Delhi, 1995.

⁶⁵ P. Parmeshwaran, “Hindutva & Dialectics: P. Parmeshwaran Answers O.V. Vijayan” from *The Indian Express*, July 3, 1996 as reproduced in *BJP Today*, July 16-31, 1996; pp 23, (my italics). This of course reflects the contradictions in early nationalist discourse that I looked at in chapter five that accepted the basic ontological dichotomies of Orientalist writings, but responded in two different ways - on the one hand

Where Gandhi advocated the cultivation of tolerance to make secularism possible, the Hindu nationalist discourse claims a pre-given tolerance in the essence and philosophy of Hinduism while advocating aggressiveness and exclusivity in its practices. It does so even by invoking Gandhi as a Hindu leader, even as it perverts the spirit of Gandhian secularism.⁶⁶

by celebrating 'Indian spirituality' against 'Western materialism' and on the other hand by attempting to rectify the perceived weakness of Hindus by emulating the discipline, strength and organization of monotheistic, Semitic religions, such as Islam and Christianity. It is the latter of these that informs contemporary Hindu nationalist rhetoric and practice. The disciplined, organized RSS training program builds strongly on masculinist assumptions of 'fraternity' and 'military might'. See Tapan Basu, Pradip Datta Pradip, Sumit Sarkar, Tanika Sarkar and Sambuddha Sen, Khakhi Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right, Orient Longman, New Delhi. 1993, for a discussion of training programs in Hindu nationalist organizations. For the role of women in the RSS, see Tanika Sarkar, Sarkar Tanika, "The Rashtrasevika Samiti and Ramjanmabhoomi" in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today, Viking, Penguin Books, New Delhi, India, 1993. It is also interesting to see the attempt to recuperate the militant, and aggressive aspects of Hinduism represented in such historical icons as the military valour of Shivaji and Rana Pratap in the BJP re-writing of Indian history. For the image of Ram as a militant crusader in VHP propaganda, see Anuradha Kapur, "Deity to Crusader: The Changing Iconography of Ram" in Pandey Gyanendra (ed.), Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today, Viking, Penguin Books, New Delhi, India. 1993.

⁶⁶The Hindu nationalist position has always had an ambivalent and contradictory relation with the figure of Gandhi. Certain segments within the RSS in particular have been extremely critical of Gandhi's role in what is seen as appeasing Muslims and enabling the partition of the Indian subcontinent. Gandhi's invocation of the principle of *ahimsa* (non-violence) in the freedom struggle was seen by many more militant Hindu nationalists as effete and ineffective. Also Gandhi's mobilization of the lower castes was resented by many upper-caste Hindu interests. It should be recalled that Gandhi was assassinated in the name of Hindu nationalism by a member of the RSS. But Gandhi's own invocation of Hinduism in politics is also viewed quite favorably by many contemporary Hindu nationalists, and Gandhi's conceptualization of secularism as Sarva Dharama Sambhava is also accepted by most BJP ideologues. (See for eg. J.C. Jetli, "Religion and Politics – Mahatma Gandhi's Views", in BJP Today, Dec 1-15, 1994: 16-19, an article that favorably quotes Gandhi's writing on religion and politics very extensively.) Even though my discussion above of the BJP's appropriation of what I call 'Gandhian secularism' is based on a particular discourse of Indian secularism, that has no *necessary* relation with the persona of Gandhi as a political figure, it is also the case that many BJP and other Hindu nationalist leaders explicitly invoke the figure of Gandhi in their political speeches and commentaries. Positioning itself as a legitimate inheritor of Gandhian ideals, a BJP leader said, "The Congress has neglected Gandhi, bothering only about Nehru. There are certain ideals such as swadeshi, simple living, a Hindu way of life, that we share with Gandhi." (as quoted in, "Season for change", in India Today, October 20, 1997; pp 19.) Part of this need to appropriate the figure of Gandhi is based on his stature as a national and international leader which makes it a tremendous symbolic resource in Indian politics, especially among the middle classes. Public rejection of Gandhi often brings a strong and passionate response from many people, as was evidenced by the reaction to a recent talk show on Indian television, and also in the controversy surrounding the criticism of Gandhi by BSP leaders like Mayawati and Kanshi Ram as pointed out in chapter six.

Under positive secularism, all special privileges to minority communities would be disbanded. It is on this basis that the BJP has called for the repeal of Article 370 with respect to the special status of Kashmir, the creation of a uniform civil code that applies to all citizens of India regardless of their religious (and other) affiliations, the Amendment of Article 30 that allows minorities to establish their own educational institutions to safeguard their cultural, religious and linguistic heritage and the dissolution of the Minorities Commission and its replacement by a Human Rights Commission. It is claimed that the Indian/Hindu state requires no legal safeguards for minorities because of the tolerant nature of Hinduism.⁶⁷

The 'Nation-State' in BJP Discourse

“The BJP is committed to the concept of one nation, one people, one culture – our nationalist vision is not merely bound by the geographical or political identity of India, but defined by our ancient cultural heritage. From this belief flows our faith in ‘Cultural Nationalism’ which is the core

⁶⁷Compare this with a slogan such as “*Go-hatya karne vale ki hatya karna pratyek Hindu ka dharmik Kartavya hai*” - it is the religious duty of every Hindu to slaughter those who slaughter cows. (A slogan found in the VHP showroom near the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi site. From Gyanendra Pandey, “The Civilized and the Barbarian: The New Politics of Late Twentieth Century India and the World”, in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today*, Viking, Penguin Books, New Delhi, India. 1993; pp 16.) Or a Sadhu’s (holy man) less than spritual exhortation during a VHP rally, “We shall cut the heads of those who shed a single drop of cow’s blood”, quoted in Amrit Dhillon and N.K. Singh, “Making Capital out of Cattle” in *India Today*, Jan 31, 1996: pp 38. That certain constitutional guarantees against cow slaughter provided in the compromised Nehruvian constitution, problematic though they might be, are to be replaced or combined with such edicts cannot exactly be expected to inspire confidence among minority religious groups on the tolerant character of ‘Hindu secularism’!

The issue of “cow slaughter” has generated a particularly emotive campaign by Hindu nationalists to generate public support that is problematic not just because of its aggressive and violent nature, but also because it is seen to represent a particularistic Brahminical version of Hinduism. While the VHP continues to make various outrageous claims about the effects of eating cow meat and the declining cattle population in India, studies have shown that India has the largest, and somewhat rising cattle population, and that a large section of the Indian population eats beef including Muslims, Christians, tribal populations, lower caste Hindu groups and even some other sections of Hindus in some parts of the country. Especially among the poorer populations, beef remains an important source of protein, since it is cheaper than other meats. (See Amrit Dhillon and N.K. Singh, “Making Capital out of Cattle” in *India Today*, Jan 31, 1996: 38-43, and Ilaiah Kancha, “Beef, BJP and Food Rights of People”, in *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 15. 1996: 1444-1445.)

of *Hindutva*. That, we believe, is the identity of our ancient nation – *Bharatvarsha*. *Hindutva* is a unifying principle which alone can preserve the unity and integrity of our nation. It is a collective endeavour to protect and re-energise the soul of India, to take us in to the next millennium as a strong and prosperous nation... We hold that only by recognizing the limitless strength of cultural nationalism, can the nation be moulded.”⁶⁸

The idea of the nation-state is fundamental to the Hindu nationalist project. For a discourse that makes its claims to ‘tradition’ through a rejection of Western modernity, it is interesting that the genealogy and the history of the ‘nation-state’ are left unproblematized within the discourse.⁶⁹ It has been argued that it was Hindu nationalists in the late 19th and early 20th century who first accepted and popularized the concept of the modern, centralized nation-state, borrowed from Western models, in India. As Nandy points out, “as far as the role of nation-state in the Indian civilization is concerned, Indian modernists as well as radicals have drawn upon the ideological framework first popularized by Hindu nationalism. It was in their model that the modern nation-state first became an absolute value and acquired absolute primacy over the needs of the Indian civilization”.⁷⁰ Similarly, Chatterjee points out how the historical imagining of the Indian nation was always tied to the narrative history of Hindu India, so that even to emphasize

⁶⁸ BJP Election Manifesto, BJP Publication No. E/36/96, New Delhi, 1996: pp 15 (emphasis in original).

⁶⁹ For such problematizations, see for instance Partha Chatterjee, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN. 1986; Elie Kedourie, Nationalism. Blackwell, Oxford. 1993; and Elie Kedourie, Nationalism in Asia and Africa. World Pub. Co., New York. 1970.

⁷⁰ Ashis Nandy, “Culture, State and the Rediscovery of Indian Politics”, in Economic and Political Weekly, December 8. 1984; pp 2080. The idea of the nation was conceptualized for instance in the work of Veer Savarkar, who was one of the first to articulate the idea of Hindutva that the BJP now uses and M.S. Golwalkar, who is regarded as having articulated the ideology of the RSS. Savarkar defined Hindus as a nation, despite their linguistic, social, and regional differences, the three main components of the Hindu nation being geographical unity, racial features and a common inherited culture. (See Veer Savarkar, Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?, Veer Savarkar Prakashan, Bombay, 1969) Golwalkar uses five criteria to define the nation: geographical unity, race, religion, culture and language. (M.S. Golwalkar, We, or our nationhood defined, Bharat Prakashan, Nagpur, 1939.) I will continue to draw on the works of these two

the singularity of the modern Indian national formation, often demanded by the needs to legitimize a centralized state, makes available the resources for the imagining of a particularistic vision of Hindu India.⁷¹

In this section, I look at how the BJP articulates the concept of the nation-state to secure legitimacy for its claims on Hindu secularism. I begin by exploring a number of related dimensions of the contemporary Hindu nationalist movement's imagination of the 'nation'. Beginning with an exploration of the BJP's claims to represent the 'essence' of the Indian nation, I then look at how that discourse on the nation interpellates Indians as Hindus. As my analysis reveals, this interpellation draws on a particular and problematic construction of the Hindu community. Further, this construction of the 'Hindu self' also simultaneously constructs a 'Muslim other'. I show also how the 'territoriality' of the Hindu nationalist imaginary further helps demarcate this other from the self. Finally, I look at the relation between the 'nation' and the 'state' within this discourse. Hindu nationalist ideologue Deendayal Upadhyaya recognizes the role of nationalism in Europe that "brought nation and state together resulting in nation states"⁷², and accepts it as the basis for the global political order. Now even if it is possible to analytically separate the 'nation' and the 'state' as I do in chapter four, their close articulation in the modern political imaginary means that it is much more difficult to separate 'discourses of the nation' from 'discourses of the state'. Hence, as I will show below, BJP claims articulated in terms of the Hindu/Indian nation often have implicit in them (and sometimes more explicitly formulate) a particular conception of the Indian state.

early Hindu nationalist ideologues to analyze some of the underpinnings of the contemporary Hindu nationalist thinking on the nation-state.

⁷¹ Partha Chatterjee, "History and Nationalization of Hinduism", in *Social Research*, Vol. 59, No. 1. Spring 1992; pp 112.

The 'Essence' of the Indian Nation

BJP claims to statehood draw their legitimacy from its claims to represent the 'authentic' and 'singular' voice of the Indian nation. This 'singularity' of the Indian nation needs to be established and demonstrated. Its establishment requires rejection of India's multi-national character.

"The composite culture theory, as propounded and the Marxian discovery that India was not just multi-lingual and multi-religious, but a multi-national State, a geographical construct, were the two strands for rationalizing the stoking of separateness among Muslims... (t)he concept of composite culture was cited to support and sustain distinct cultural and even political identities outside the mainstream. The more appropriate view nearer to truth is that Indian culture is one with continuity and change over 5000 years and if it has a name it is only Hindu."⁷³

Establishing the 'authenticity' of the nation also requires rejection of the theory that India is the product of a postcolonial imagination.

"The nation in India is not the result of British rule or, for that matter, of the freedom movement. Nor is it a product of the Constitution of India. In fact, the freedom movement itself was the manifestation of the national spirit that arose to fire the struggle for swaraj."⁷⁴

There are two different strands at work here. On the one hand is the clear recognition that the nation is a cultural construct. Answering the question "what is a nation?",

⁷² Deendayal Upadhyaya, Integral Humanism, BJP Publication No. E/57/1985, New Delhi, 1985: pp 6.

⁷³ BJP's White Paper on Ayodhya & The Rama Temple Movement, Bharatiya Janata Party Publication, New Delhi, April 1993: pp 11. Similarly, Golwalkar used to chide the Congress for the "amazing theory that the nation is composed of all those who, for one reason or the other happen to live at the time in the country" (Golwalkar, ibid; pp 59) and cite favourably that "Germany has also shown how well-nigh impossible it is for races and cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by." (Golwalkar, ibid; pp 35)

⁷⁴ L.K Advani, "Advani's Presidential Speech", in BJP Today, Nov 16-Dec 15, 1995: pp 9. Contrast this with the kind of postcolonial argument that "...there never had been a political entity called India until 1947. The thing that became independent had never previously existed, except that there had been an area, a zone called India. So it struck me that what was coming into being, this idea of a nation-state, was an

Deendayal Upadhyaya says, “(W)hen a group of persons lives with a goal, and ideal, a mission, and looks upon a particular piece of land as motherland, this group constitutes a nation.”⁷⁵ That culture is central is recognized explicitly in BJP discourses. As pointed out in a BJP document, “nationalism is not just a geographical or political concept; it is essentially a cultural concept.”⁷⁶ “Cultural nationalism”, another document points out is what defines “the core of *Hindutva*”.⁷⁷ On the other hand, culture in this discourse is primordialist and static. Every nation has a “soul”, points out Deendayal Upadhyaya, “*chiti*” or “an innate nature, which is inborn, and is not the result of historical circumstances”. Even if history might modify national culture, *chiti* remains intact and “central to the nation from its very beginning.”⁷⁸ The nation has always existed, and “(t)he Constitution of India actually recognized an ancient nation that has existed for thousands of years in this land.”⁷⁹ Furthermore it is important to recognize that “(t)he nation in India always remained Hindu, whether the State was controlled by Turks, Afghans, Moghuls, Portuguese, French, English or Nehruvian Secularists.”⁸⁰ But since the integrity of this nation has been undermined by other political players, the BJP now seeks to recuperate “the spirit of India, epitomized by *Hindutva*.”⁸¹

invention. It was an invention of the nationalist movement. And a very successful invention.” (Salman Rushdie, “A Fantasy Called India”, in India Today, Aug 18, 1997; pp 36.

⁷⁵ Upadhyaya, ibid: pp 26.

⁷⁶ Supreme Court on “Hindutva” & “Hinduism” and L.K. Advani’s Statement, BJP Publication No. E/19/95, New Delhi, 1995: pp 1.

⁷⁷ BJP Election Manifesto, BJP Publication No. E/3?96, New Delhi, 1996: pp 15 (emphasis in document).

⁷⁸ Upadhyaya, ibid: pp 27-28.

⁷⁹ L.K. Advani, “Advani’s Presidential Speech”, in BJP Today, Nov 16-Dec 15, 1995: pp 9.

⁸⁰ BJP’s White Paper on Ayodhya & The Rama Temple Movement, BJP Publication, New Delhi, April 1993; pp 15.

⁸¹ L.K. Advani, “Basis of our Nationalism is our Culture and Heritage”, Presidential Address to the BJP National Council Session held on 10-12 June, 1994 at Vadodra, Gujarat, as reproduced in BJP Today, June 16-30, 1994: pp 12.

Recuperation of this nation-as-culture requires an imagining of a 'golden past', a "Ram Rajya", in which "not only human beings but every creature was happy and contented."⁸² This "pre-Moghul India" was the ideal example of a harmonious and pluralist society that could accommodate all religions, and it is "the invasion by fanatic religious statecraft that intervened and introduced inter-religious disharmony and hatred toward all indigenous faiths."⁸³ Hence, the singularity and authenticity of the nation is demonstrated through laying claim to an "ancient heritage".

"The basis of our nationalism is our culture and heritage. To us, nationalism has no meaning separated from the inheritance of the Vedas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, Gautam Buddha, Lord Mahavira, Adi Sankaracharya, Guru Nanak, Maharana Pratap, Shivaji Maharaj, Rani Laxmibai, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Dayanand, Lokmanya Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi, Jayaprakash Narayan and countless other national heroes."⁸⁴

This ancient culture is 'Hindu' in its essence, an essence that has withstood the ravages of time, in particular the ravages of Islam.⁸⁵

⁸² BJP's White Paper on Ayodhya & The Rama Temple Movement, BJP Publication, New Delhi, April 1993; pp 14.

⁸³ BJP's White Paper on Ayodhya & The Rama Temple Movement, BJP Publication, New Delhi, April 1993; pp 15.

⁸⁴ L.K. Advani, "Basis of our Nationalism is our Culture and Heritage", Presidential Address to the BJP National Council Session held on 10-12 June, 1994 at Vadodra, Gujarat, as reproduced in BJP Today, June 16-30, 1994: pp 7. The list of 'national heroes' in this quote is quite telling of who belongs to the Hindu nation within the Hindu nationalist discourse, as I will expound on later in this chapter. Other than several Hindu figures, the list also includes Budha, Mahavira and Nanak as representatives of Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism that are claimed as part of the Hindu fold. Muslim figures are conspicuous by their absence in the list.

⁸⁵ Sometimes, rather than an essentialist argument such as this, a majoritarian argument is advanced in favor of Hindu nationalism. In the words of BJP leader K.R. Malkani: "Some friends would say that BJP is the party of 'Hindu nationalism' and not Indian nationalism. They are at once right – and wrong. The BJP is the party of nationalism, and since India is overwhelmingly Hindu, under our democratic system this nationalism cannot but have a Hindu complexion." (K.R. Malkani, "Understanding the BJP", in BJP Today, June 1-15, 1994: pp 20-210). However, while the majoritarian argument is more commonly and explicitly used when discussing issues of democracy, governance, state policies, I find that the nation is usually discussed in much more organic terms, in terms of 'primordial essences', that has little to do with the numerical calculations of electoral politics. This is not to say that the BJP is not advancing a majoritarian nationalism, but rather pointing out how that majoritarian nationalism is presented so that it seems less majoritarian and more 'natural'.

“In history there are very few examples of countries maintaining their national identity and culture even after centuries of Muslim rule. Where even great civilizations like Egypt and Iran went under, only some Balkan areas, Spain and India stood their ground... The prolonged people’s resistance to foreign invasion and oppression gave India a strong national pan-Hindu identity.”⁸⁶

It is on this basis that it is repeatedly asserted that ‘*Hindutva*’ and ‘*Bharatiyata*’ (Indianness) are the same. If the essence of the Indian nation has always been and remains Hindu, Indian national identity is ‘naturally’ coterminous with Hinduness.

The Interpellation of Indians as Hindus

Implicit in this BJP discourse on the Indian nation is a discourse on the Hindu community. The success of Hindu nationalism depends on the ability to speak in the name of a ‘Hindu nation’, that exists with a pre-given identity and with a set of fixed interests. Hence the claim about the ‘essence’ of India as Hindu requires further interrogation. First, there is an implicit claim here about who ‘belongs’ to India and who is an ‘outsider’. Second, there is an assumption also about the existence of a pre-given Hindu community whose boundaries are clear and self-evident. However, that a significant amount of political labour is expended by the BJP in claiming Hindus as the ‘natural inhabitants’ of India and on drawing the boundaries around the ‘Hindu self’ reveals how unstable and problematic the claim about the essence of India as Hindu is.

To establish that Hindus are the ‘natural’ or ‘original’ inhabitants of India requires erasing the history of Aryan conquest and settlement in India. There has been a proliferation of literature that attempts to re-write this history by demonstrating the

⁸⁶ K.R. Malkani, “The New Age Hindu: Renaissance in Cultural Nationalism”, in Times of India, date unknown.

indigenous roots of Hinduism.⁸⁷ Hindu militant organizations, like the RSS, have been working amongst the tribal and hills people in India and attempting to bring them into the fold of Hinduism. The labeling of such groups as *vanvasis* (forest-dwellers) rather than *adivasis* (original dwellers) suggests a conscious attempt to erase the association of Hinduism with ‘alien’ Aryan roots.⁸⁸ This is always accompanied by the attempt to project Muslims as ‘foreigners’ (*Babar ki aulad* or progeny of Babar⁸⁹), as invaders and conquerors much like the British (only worse)⁹⁰.

The second assumption about who belongs to the Hindu community is even more problematic, and has had a much longer history of contestation. There have been at least two sources of resistance to the Hindu nationalist definition of the Hindu community. Romila Thapar’s work has done much to problematize the very conceptualization of a Hindu religion or a Hindu community. She claims that it was Orientalist scholarship that attempted to reconstruct the various parallel systems, practices and religious beliefs that

⁸⁷ For Savarkar, Hindus are the descendants of the “intrepid Aryans (who) made it (the subcontinent) their home and lighted their first sacrificial fire on the bank of the...Indus.” (Savarkar, *ibid*; pp 4-5) In contrast with Savarkar, Golwalkar claims that “Hindus came into this land from nowhere, but are indigenous children of the soil always, from time immemorial.” (Golwalkar, *ibid*; pp 8) While it is the former position that forms the dominant understanding in India, it is the latter position that BJP ideologues have tried to popularize. At a conference held in January 1993, right-wing historians introduced the theory that Aryans were indigenous to India, and their successors therefore the rightful claimants of the land. (See “RSS Leader Reiterates Theory on Aryans” in *Times of India*, Jan 29, 1993) This theory had been introduced into history textbooks in the states governed by the BJP from 1990 to 1992. I will have more to say on the role of education in the Hindu nationalist movement’s ‘war of position’ in the concluding section of this chapter. For a critique of such claims made by the BJP, see Romila Thapar, “The Perennial Aryans”, *Seminar*, No. 400, December 1992.

⁸⁸ I get this point from Gyanendra Pandey, “Which of Us are Hindus?” in Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *Hindus and Others: The Question of Identity in India Today*. Viking, Penguin Books, New Delhi, India. 1993. I also found this to be the case from my own survey of BJP documents that reveals the use of *vanvasis* and *girijans* (another word for forest dwellers) rather than *adivasis*. One of the primary RSS organisations working among the tribal and hills people is the Adivasi Kalyan (Well-Being) Ashram.

⁸⁹ Babar was the first Mughal emperor in the Indian subcontinent.

⁹⁰ As Pandey (*ibid*) points out, this occurs despite the contradictory claim also made that most Muslims in India are lower-caste, innocent Hindus forcibly converted by Muslims. For example, Rajendra Singh, the head of RSS, said that “ninety-eight per cent of the Muslims in Indian are converts.” (See interview in Yubaraj Ghimre, “In the Limelight, Again” in *India Today*, April 30, 1994; pp 24)

existed in India (better called Hindu religions, in the plural) into a coherent and rational faith called 'Hinduism', and this was done from the familiar perspective of Semitic religions.⁹¹ Even more importantly, the construct of the 'Hindu community' that Hindu nationalists draw on is a particularistic Brahmanical Hinduism that has been maintained through caste hierarchy. Groups now designated as "untouchables" have sometimes been considered as "outcastes" by upper-caste Hindus, and hence not really Hindus. Many such groups have themselves often resisted being included within a generalized, monolithic Hindu political community, as we saw in chapter six.⁹² As we also saw in the previous chapter, much of the BJP support comes from upper-caste, middle-class, urban, Northern India, even though the party has attempted with some limited success to broaden considerably its support structure.⁹³ This upper-caste orientation of the party was

⁹¹ See Romila Thapar, "Communalism and the Historical Legacy: Some Facets" in K.N.Panikkar K.(ed.), Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture, Manohar, New Delhi. 1991; Romila Thapar, "The Politics of Religious Communities", Seminar, No. 365, Jan 1990; Romila Thapar, "Imagined Religious Communities? Ancient History and the Modern Search for a Hindu Identity" in Modern Asian Studies, 23, 2. 1989; Romila Thapar, "Syndicated Moksha", Seminar, No. 313, September. 1985. See also chapter five. For a critique of Thapar's work, see Brian K. Smith who argues that it is this claim of the amorphousness of Hinduism and the difficulties in defining it that have made possible the Hindutva movement's chauvinism and exclusiveness under the guise of the impossibility of such chauvinism and exclusivism in Hinduism. (Brian Smith., "Re-envisioning Hinduism and Evaluating the Hindutva Movement", in Religion, 26. 1996: 119-128) In a sympathetic response to Smith, Ninian Smart argues that regardless of the difficulties of defining Hinduism, and even if one can claim that there *was* no such thing as Hinduism, one needs to confront the realities of modern constructions of Hinduism that makes Hindutva possible. (See Ninian Smart, "Response to Brian K. Smith: Re-envisioning Hinduism". Religion, 26. 1996: 137-140)

⁹² See Kancha Ilaiah, Why I Am Not a Hindu: A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy, Culture and Political Economy, Samya (an imprint of Bhatkal and Sen), Calcutta, 1996 for an excellent critique of Brahminical Hindutva from a dalit perspective. Ilaiah rejects assimilation into the Hindu fold, despite an abundance of messages that claim sudras as part of the Hindu order, finding more commonality in his experiences with Muslims and Christians than with upper-caste Brahmins and Banyas.

⁹³ There is also a regional aspect to this Hindu identity. Some of the early Hindu nationalists (such as Dayanand Saraswati) did not recognize that India south of the Vindhyas could also be drawn into the Arya movement. (See Pandey, ibid) Even now, the success of the BJP is most prominent in the North Indian 'Hindi heartland' as I showed in chapter six, even though the party has begun to make some inroads in Southern India. Regional political parties from the South, such as the DMK and the TDP have always been somewhat suspicious of the BJP's stand on the language issue – of imposing Hindi. In West Bengal, the party has made a concerted attempt to incorporate Bengali national leaders like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee and even Subhas Chandra Bose more explicitly into the campaign, albeit with only limited success. This North-Indian focus of the party is also evident in the use of Ram (who is worshipped mostly in Northern India) as the icon of Hindu nationalism.

to some extent revealed in the reaction to the Mandal Commission's recommendation, when it was charged that this would result in “apartheid, Indian style”, dividing the Hindus as a community⁹⁴. Similarly, the politics of the BSP-SP representing lower caste interests is attributed a “sinister design” in “undermining the very fabric of Indian society.”⁹⁵ Hence, the grassroots work conducted by the BJP, RSS and other affiliated organizations feel it necessary to repeatedly assert that dalit groups are “part and parcel of Hindu society”.⁹⁶

There are other religious groups that are claimed by Hindu nationalists to be part of the Hindu ambit, but who have and continue to reject such an incorporation. This includes Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs and various Bhakti sects such as Kabirpanthis and Vallabhacharya, all of whom the BJP considers as offshoots of Hinduism, but who have always resisted such inclusion.⁹⁷ For instance, the construction and consolidation of a

⁹⁴ India Today, Sept. 15, 1990; pp 36. See the discussion of the Mandal issue (that recommended an extension of reservations for lower caste groups) in chapter six.

⁹⁵ L.K. Advani, “Basis of our Nationalism is our Culture and Heritage”, Presidential Address delivered at the BJP National Council Session 10-12 June, 1994, Vadodra, Gujarat, as reproduced in BJP Today, June 16-30, 1994; pp 12. The assertion sometimes made in Hindu nationalist camps that caste is an anachronism that is being used instrumentally for political gains by other political parties is clearly contradicted by Kanchi Ilaih’s (ibid) excellent and extensive documentation of how caste hierarchy structures every aspect of Indian society.

⁹⁶ See “Minister Kesari (sic) asks Dalits to renounce Hinduism” in BJP Today, August 16-31, 1995; 16 and Sudheendra Kulkarni, “Between Ram and Kanshi Ram, History Turns a New Leaf,” in BJP Today, July 1-15, 1995; 12-14.

⁹⁷ See footnote 84 and 91. On being asked in an interview whether Hindutva meant “India for Hindus”, Vajpayee answered: “I don’t see any difference between Hindutva and Bharatiyata, Indianness. Hindutva attaches importance to looking after the roots which have to be strengthened, and these roots lie in Hinduism. But Hinduism, as I said earlier, is not Hindu religion; in fact there is no such thing as Hindu religion. There is Sanatan Dharma, there are Vedic Dharma, Kabir Panthi, Nanak Panthi, followers of Shankaracharya. So I don’t make any distinction between Hinduism and Indianism – the only difference being that Hinduism lays stress on the ancientness of Hindu philosophy, while Bharatiyata is the way to translate it into modern terms.” (See A.B. Vajpayee in interview with M.Ramallah of Mauritius Times on June 15th, 1995 during visit to Mauritius, as reproduced in “India will now allow another Partition” in BJP Today, Aug 16-31, 1995: 6-8.) Smart points out that it was this alleged comprehensiveness of Hinduism, and the insistence of leaders like Vivekananda and Gandhi on its pluralism, that created the basis for some kind of a pan-Indian national movement that could appeal to Muslims, Christians, Parsis, as well as to lower castes and untouchables in the anti-colonial struggle. However, the Hindu nationalist movement in

singular, well-defined Sikh identity had itself come from the earlier resistance of the Singh Sabha movement to the assimilationist attempts of the Hindu revivalist Arya Samaj at 'purification' and 'reconversion' in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries.⁹⁸ The Sikh demands that led to the Punjab crisis are seen by the BJP as a creation of a pseudo-secularist politics in which groups claim a minority status to use the state for its own interests. This attempt to appropriate Sikh identity erases the legitimacy of many of the genuine political demands of Sikhs that continue to be ignored.

The point is that since the days of Hindu ideologue Savarkar's Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?, there has been an explicit attempt to fix the meaning of Hinduism by appropriating and assimilating within its fold various groups, many of whose self-identities have been staked in opposition to Hinduism. In Savarkar's work there is also an explicit attempt to construct this Hindu nation as a 'race'. It is quite common to see the category of 'race' invoked in the writings of many of the early Hindu nationalists. Many such writers borrowed from Western racial theory to conceptualize religious communities as distinct 'races'.⁹⁹ It is interesting to see that even though important ideologues like Savarkar and Golwalkar attempt to define race at least partially in

post-colonial India while deploying the same themes is subverting its pluralistic spirit. (See Ninian Smart, "Response to Brian K. Smith: Re-envisioning Hinduism", Religion, 26. 1996: 137-140)

⁹⁸ See T.N. Madan, "The Double-Edged Sword: Fundamentalism and the Sikh Religious Tradition" in Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, Fundamentalisms Observed, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

⁹⁹ For the influence of European ideas of race, including Eugenic ideas of German fascism on Savarkar and Golwalkar (as well as other early Hindu nationalists) see Christophe Jaffrelot, "The ideas of the Hindu race in the writings of Hindu nationalist ideologues in the 1920s and 1930s: A concept between two cultures" in Peter Robb (ed.), The Concept of Race in South Asia, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1995. Savarkar and Golwalkar were certainly not the first to articulate a notion of the Hindu race. See for eg. Har Bilas Sarda, Hindu Superiority: An Attempt to Determine the Position of the Hindu Race in the Scale of Nations, Ajmer Rajputana Printing Works, 1906. More recently, Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray, a self-professed admirer of Hitler has compared Muslims in India to Jews in Nazi Germany, and BJP leader Malkani in a television interview stated his belief that many Indians admired Hitler. (See Tapan Raychaudhuri, "Shadows of the Swastika: Historical Reflections on the Politics of Hindu Communalism", in Contention, Vol. 4, No. 2, Winter 1995: 141-162)

biological terms¹⁰⁰, the thrust of the argument is on cultural variables. Hence a Hindu in Savarkar's discourse is one "who has inherited and claims as his own the culture of that race as expressed chiefly in their common classical language Sanskrit and represented by a common history, a common literature, art and architecture, law and jurisprudence, rites and rituals, ceremonies and sacraments, fairs and festivals..."¹⁰¹ Race, in Golwalkar's writing, is defined as "a hereditary society having common customs, common language, common memories of glory or disaster; in short, it is a population with a common origin under one culture,"¹⁰² and it is on this basis that the 'Hindu race' is defined. In such an analysis, race and culture are both constituted through the category of religion.¹⁰³ It is typical also of the Hindu communal discourse, as Purushottam Agarwal points out, that

¹⁰⁰ "Hindus are not merely the citizens of the Indian state because they are united not only by the bonds of love they bear to a common motherland but also by the bonds of a common blood...All Hindus claim to have in their veins the blood of the mighty race incorporated with and descended from the Vedic fathers." (V.D. Savarkar, *ibid*: pp 84-85). Yet, the idea of genetic racial purity is rejected by Savarkar. His historical account of the formation of the 'Hindu people' assumes that Aryans and foreigners intermingled when the former entered India and he calls on foreigners who aspire to become Hindus to marry Hindus, have Hindu children, assimilate into Hindu culture, etc. This is also true of Golwalkar's definition in which the biological factor is even more underplayed.

¹⁰¹ Savarkar, *ibid*; pp 115-116.

¹⁰² M.S. Golwalkar, *ibid*; pp 21

¹⁰³ This leads Brenda Crossman and Ratna Kapur to conclude that "despite the emphasis on racial differences, it was the difference of religion that remained as a constituting movement of the oppositional identities", so that even though contemporary Hindu nationalist discourse still carries some "traces" of the "racial construction of Hindus", the emphasis clearly is on religion. (Brenda Crossman and Ratna Kapur, "Secularism: Bench-Marked by Hindu Right" in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Sept 21, 1996; pp 2617-2619) However, I believe that this distinction between religion and race can often be somewhat tenuous. The point is that religious (and cultural) differences can be 'racialized'. Jaffrelot calls it a "special kind of racism", that borrows from the hierarchical principles of 'Indian traditional xenology'. (Jaffrelot, *ibid*; pp 56) Hence, while in this early Hindu nationalist discourse, the category of race is explicitly used in the process of racialization, the contemporary discourse as I will point out below, continues to racialize, albeit with a much more muted explicit invocation of race. It is interesting to see that at one point, 'possessing' race in Savarkar's discourse is considered good, since "Mohammedans are no race nor are the Christians. They are a religious unit, yet neither a racial nor a national one. But we Hindus, if possible, are all the three put together, and live under our ancient and common roof." (Savarkar, *ibid*; pp 134) But this is not a consistent position, and Muslims (and Christians) are often identified as 'races' in much of the early Hindu nationalist discourse.

various ethnic groups owing allegiance to Islam are transformed into one single race, the Muslim.¹⁰⁴

But unlike the category of the 'nation', it is very rare to find the category of 'race' explicitly invoked in the contemporary Hindu nationalist discourse. Yet, even though the BJP does not explicitly invoke the category of race very much (affiliated organizations like the VHP and the RSS still refer to race occasionally), these early formulations inform the BJP construction of Hindu identity and non-Hindu others. Hence, not only are Muslims homogenized into one monolithic community, but also associated with a range of essentialized negative characteristics such as 'dirt', 'excessive libidinal energies' or 'animal sexuality', 'backward cultural norms', etc.¹⁰⁵ Prominent here is the phenomenal procreative power attributed to the racialized community, which is a trademark of racial discourse almost everywhere. VHP propaganda stresses both the practice of polygamy and the virility of the Muslim male as contributing to fertility rates that would lead to the Muslim population eventually outnumbering the Hindus. Says a VHP leader, "Muslims follow a more insidious path to conversion – seduction and then marriage with innocent Hindu girls."¹⁰⁶ A VHP pamphlet states that the Muslim family planning motto is, "*Hum*

¹⁰⁴ Purshottam Agarwal, "Surat, Savarkar and Draupadi: Legitimizing Rape as a Political Weapon", in Tanika Sarkar & Urvashi Butalia (ed.), Women & Right-Wing Movements: Indian Experiences, Kali for Women, Zed Books, New Delhi, 1995.

¹⁰⁵ It is interesting to see how such prejudice creeps into the work of someone like Deendayal Upadhyaya who goes to considerable length to sound extremely reasoned and unbiased in his thinking. On the question of whether "the modes of thinking of Hindus and Muslims differ", Upadhyaya points out from a conversation that "there are good and bad people in every society. There can be found honest and good people in Hindus as well as in Muslims. Similarly rascals can be found in both the societies. No particular society has a monopoly of goodness. However, it is observed that Hindus even if they are rascals in individual life, when they come together in a group, they always think of good things. On the other hand when two Muslims come together, they propose and approve of things which they themselves in their individual capacity would not even think of. They start thinking in an altogether different way. This is an everyday experience." (Deendayal Upadhyaya, *Integral Humanism*, BJP Publication No. E/57/1985: 24-25)

¹⁰⁶ quoted in Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, "Toothless Wonder", India Today, Dec 15, 1997; pp 15.

paanch, hamare pacchis” (We are five, ie 1 Muslim man and his 4 wives, and we have 25 children).¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Muslim migrants from Bangladesh are attributed with animal sexuality, dirt, undesirable social behavior, which includes in particular the rape of Hindu women.

In other words, to hail Indians as Hindus is also an attempt to appropriate many non-Hindus as Hindus, while simultaneously rejecting Muslims as Indians. This is what makes the definition of the Hindu nation within BJP discourse both problematically broad and dangerously narrow. The articulation of this nation with ‘territory’, as the next section elaborates, serves to further highlight this distinction.

The Nation as ‘Territory’

In the works of early Hindu nationalist ideologues, the concept of “territory”, is fundamental in demarcating the self from the other. For Savarkar, a Hindu is a “person who regards the land of Bharatvarsha from Indus to the Seas as his Fatherland (*pritrabhu*) as well as his Holyland (*punyabhu*) – that is the cradle of his religion.”¹⁰⁸ Hence, Muslims (and Christians):

“who had originally been forcibly converted to a non-Hindu religion and who consequently have inherited along with Hindus a common Fatherland and a greater part of the wealth of common culture – language, law custom, folklore and history, (they) are not and cannot be recognized as Hindus. For though Hindusthan to them is Fatherland as to any other Hindu yet it is not to them a Holyland too. Their Holyland is far off in Arabia or Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently their names and their outlook smack of a foreign origin. Their love is divided.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ This is a take-off on the well-known Indian family planning slogan, “*Hum Do, Hamre Do*” (We are two, and we have two children), urging Indians to restrict the size of their families.

¹⁰⁸ Savarkar, *ibid*; pp 3-4.

¹⁰⁹ Savarkar, *ibid*; pp 113. Even though by this definition both Muslims and Christians are territorial ‘others’, it is interesting that the Muslim usually becomes the center of this othering process. In many

It is this “fact” of divided loyalties that others the Muslims since “Mecca to them is a sterner reality than Delhi or Agra”.¹¹⁰ Similarly, for Golwalkar, Muslims (and Christians) are cast as ‘foreign races’ whose religious allegiance lies to a foreign holy land.

With the creation of Pakistan, the territoriality of Hindu nationalist claims has witnessed a shift.¹¹¹ It is now allegiance to Pakistan that tests the loyalty of Indian Muslims. It is often claimed by Hindu nationalists that Pakistan forms the object of the extra-territorial loyalty of Indian Muslims, thus rendering their patriotism always suspect. The slogan ‘*Babar ki aulad, bhago Pakistan ya kabristan*’ (Babur’s children – either go to Pakistan or to your grave) captures this sentiment in an extreme way. In its relatively more benign expression, L.K. Advani, president of the BJP, urged Indian Muslims to celebrate 50 years of Indian independence by purging from their minds every trace of the

ways, from the Hindu nationalist perspective, Muslims were the “threatening others”, while the (Christian) British colonialists represented the other to be emulated (even though rejected). (See Christophe Jaffrelot, The Hindu Nationalist Movement in India, Viking, Paris, 1993) It is common to find distinctions made between other invaders and vicious, hateful Muslim invaders. (See Purshottam Agarwal, “Surat. Savarkar, Draupadi: Legitimising Rape as a Political Weapon”, in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (ed.), Women and Right-Wing Movements: Indian Experiences, Kali for Women, Zed Books, New Delhi, 1995; pp 45-46.) However, it is important to point out here that more recently, Christian missionaries in India did become the target of extreme acts of violence by certain militant Hindu nationalist organizations.

¹¹⁰ Savarkar, ibid; pp 135.

¹¹¹ Another aspect of this shift is the disruption in the territoriality of Hindu nationalist claims by the need to accommodate the (very influential) Hindu diaspora. The VHP has projected the idea that Hindus all over the world constitute a single country, divided for its purposes into about thirty branches. Both the VHP and the BJP have been extremely successful in networking the Indian expatriate community in the U.S and Europe, recruiting on college campuses (Hindu Students Council in the U.S.), conducting ‘culture camps’ for second-generation Hindu children, and raising enormous funds. The BJP election manifesto recognized that the “(m)illions of sons and daughters of Mother India, settled abroad as Overseas Indians, are considered by the BJP as an asset to the country. Their emotional attachment to the motherland is still deep. This must find due expression. Schemes will be drawn up to attract substantial investments by non-resident Indians. They will be welcome to set up industrial units and industrial parks, and invest in the infrastructure. The BJP will examine afresh the issue of dual citizenship.” (BJP Election Manifesto, BJP Publication No. E/3/96, New Delhi, 1996: pp 33)

two-nation theory. India-Pakistan cricket matches are instances of when Muslim patriotism is often put to such unfortunate tests of nationalist loyalty, while Hindu patriotism always remains a given.

Unified Nation/Strong State

The existence of Pakistan has always generated a particular kind of anxiety in the postcolonial Indian imagination. It is important to recognize here that since the partition of British India was also the constituting moment for the birth of postcolonial India (and Pakistan), the theme of 'national unity' holds a certain salience in the Indian political imaginary. Or in other words, a repeat partition of India is a specter that always hangs over Indian political discourse. An India Today-ORG-MARG opinion poll conducted on the occasion of India's 50th year of independence revealed that about 36% of the population believed that India would disintegrate into independent nations in the next 50 years, while only 41% believed that it would stay united.¹¹² It is interesting to see how this specter of territorial disintegration figures into the BJP discourse on a unified nation.

There are a number of dimensions to this discourse on a unified nation, implicit in which is a discourse on a strong state. First, regional, local, demands of ethnic and religious minorities take on an even greater salience as disruptive of the integrity and unity of the nation. This ties in especially with the separatist movements in Punjab and Kashmir, both of which are anxieties that the BJP has tapped very effectively, especially in terms of Pakistan's involvement. In recommending a strong stand on the Kashmir

Sometimes, another territorial dimension creeps in with the vision of *Akhand Bharat* (Greater India), that includes Pakistan and Bangladesh as well as sometimes Afghanistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Occasional (but rare) statements by BJP leaders mention taking over Pakistan and Bangladesh.

¹¹² See India Today-ORG-MARG independence poll, *India Today*, August 18, 1997.

issue, Advani points out that “(a)ny compromise here can have a disastrous domino-effect on the unity of the country.”¹¹³ The Congress is accused of creating divisive forces, and the BJP is presented as the force that would unify the nation. In that light, the BJP has favored strong internal security measures, such as in its strong and vocal support of the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA). The BJP was extremely critical of the government when TADA was allowed to lapse due to a barrage of criticism from human rights and civil liberties watch groups of the widespread discretionary powers that the act conferred on the state, and its widespread misuse, especially against Muslim minorities.

Second, even though the BJP has supported the move for the devolution of financial powers to states (as encapsulated in the Sarkaria Commission reports), especially since it has had to recognize the growing power of regional political players (and ally with some of them during elections), the party has been more in favor of a centralized state, with a uniform language and a uniform civil code. The issue of a common civil code has been especially controversial in this respect. Without going into the arguments on both sides of the issue, it is interesting to note how the BJP’s presentation of the issue couches it in terms of the ‘nation’, and how in doing so plays on some of the fears of national disintegration.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ L.K. Advani, “Basis of our Nationalism is our Culture and Heritage”, Presidential Address to the BJP National Council Session held on 10-12 June, 1994 at Vadodra, Gujarat, as reproduced in BJP Today, June 16-30, 1994: pp 7.

¹¹⁴ Another interesting presentation of the uniform civil code issue by the BJP is in terms of gender. Claiming that Muslim personal law works to the disadvantage of Muslim women, in demanding a uniform civil law the BJP presents itself as the progressive voice of women’s rights. In the words of legal expert and BJP national executive member Arun Jaitley, “We will be only too happy if the political situation so develops that the Congress(I) Government is in the company of fundamentalists while we are on the side of gender equality and the right to live with dignity.” (as quoted in Manoj Mitta, “A Calculated Gambit” in India Today, July 31, 1995; pp 98. Also see Bipin Bihari Ratho, “Uniform Civil Code is a Must”, in BJP Today, Oct 1-15, 1996: 20-22.) Drawing on dominant Indian understandings of Islam as a ‘backward’

“The existence of different personal laws, have been used by the pseudo-secularists to create a separate identity for certain religious groups thus placing their interest ahead of the Nation. The integrated personality of the Indian Nation is diluted when separate personal laws and Constitutional provisions like Article 370 which create a separate psyche are allowed to exist on the Status Book.”¹¹⁵

Similarly, responding to the issue that the linguistic reorganization of states within India had created nationalistic homelands of different linguistic cultural groups, Advani says:

I regard this ‘Homeland Thesis’ as a very dangerous thesis. If the ‘two-nation theory’ led to the partition of India, acceptance of this multi-nation theory can lead to the balkanisation of the country.¹¹⁶

Hence, the ‘specter of partition’ is crucial in establishing the need for a unified nation, and it is not uncommon for BJP leaders to assert that “India will not allow another partition.”¹¹⁷

Third, the BJP’s extremely belligerent position on external security issues is also reflective to an extent of similar imperatives. This is reflected in at least two different areas – on the need to retain and develop the nuclear option and on the issue of Bangladeshi immigration. The BJP’s strong and consistent stand on exercising the nuclear option, both on the grounds of regional threats from China and Pakistan, and to end the “nuclear apartheid” in the global arena, was concretised in the BJP government’s

religion, the BJP uses gender as a measure of this ‘Muslim backwardness’, which makes it possible for the party to avoid taking a stronger and clearer stand on Hindu women’s rights. For an argument on how the BJP’s ‘formal’ approach to gender equality both ‘others’ the Muslim community, and undermines ‘substantive’ gender equality, see Ratna Kapur and Brenda Cossman, “Communalising Gender Engendering Community: Women, Legal Discourse and the Saffron Agenda” in Tanika Sarkar and Urvashi Butalia (ed.), Women and Right-Wing Movements: Indian Experiences, Kali for Women, Zed Books, New Delhi, 1995.

¹¹⁵ “BJP for Uniform Civil Code”, in BJP Today, August 1-15, 1995: pp 7-8.

¹¹⁶ L.K.Advani, “National Integrity Dictates Decentralisation of Political and Economic Powers”, BJP Today, (date missing), 1996; pp 4-6.

¹¹⁷ See for eg. A.B. Vajpayee in interview with M.Ramallah of Mauritius Times on June 15th, 1995 during visit to Mauritius, as reproduced in “India will not allow another Partition” in BJP Today, Aug 16-31, 1995: 6-8.

decision to conduct a series of nuclear tests that has now established India as a declared nuclear power. On the issue of Bangladeshi immigration, the BJP has launched a passionate and aggressive campaign that presents the issue in terms of an “infiltration” that is a grave security risk to the integrity of the nation.¹¹⁸ This is a campaign that uses outrageous numerical estimates of Bangladeshi (Muslim) immigrants¹¹⁹, to create the fear of a serious demographic threat that would upset the current Hindu-Muslim balance, especially in North-East India. Once again, the fear of partition is drawn on in “the vision of a larger Islamic country comprising Bangladesh and the entire North-East...”¹²⁰ and the government urged to enact a Bill to stop this onslaught of Muslim immigrants.

“If this unlawful influx of foreign nationals is not stopped and effectively dealt with we will be back to situation prevailing in 1947 and earlier when Muslim League demanded the partition of the country. In order to safeguard the unity and integrity of the country and to protect the political and secular structure of the country from Islamic Fundamentalism it is of paramount importance that this Bill should be enacted.”¹²¹

¹¹⁸ See Bharatiya Janata Party Election Manifesto, BJP Publication No. E/3/96, New Delhi, 1996; pp 39-40 and BJP Foreign Policy and Resolutions, BJP Publication E/17/95, New Delhi, 1995; pp 6, 37-44 for official BJP positions on Bangladeshi immigration as a security threat.

¹¹⁹ Based on very questionable comparisons of the census projections of the Bangladeshi government and Indian government, UNDP population estimates, and fertility rates, a number of reports prepared by the BJP calculate that upto 12-20 million unaccounted for Bangladeshi people must have emigrated to India! The reports also cite an abundance of statistics for a number of states to make this dubious claim. See for eg. L.K. Advani’s statements to a Press Conference at New Delhi on July 17, 1995, reproduced as “Disturbing Trends in Census Report” in BJP Today, Aug 1-15, 1995: 11-12 ; T.V. Rajeswar Rao, “Migration or Invasion?” in BJP Today, Feb 16-29, 1996: 19-23; Mohan Guruswamy, “The Acute Problem of Illegal Migration from Bangladesh to India,” in BJP Today, Oct 16-31, 1995: 5-9; and Arun Shourie, Secular Agenda, ASA Publications, New Delhi, 1993.

¹²⁰ Murli Manohar Joshi, from extracts of speech presented to the Rajya Sabha on May 13th, 1995, as reproduced in “Enactment of “the Prevention of Influx of Foreign National Bill” Necessary to preserve unity & Integrity of the country, in BJP Today, June 1-15, 1994; pp 19. Among many other crimes, the immigrants are accused of engaging in terrorism, supported by Pakistani intelligence, and the proposed Bill recommends strict border control, including border fences.

¹²¹ Murli Manohar Joshi, from extracts of speech presented to the Rajya Sabha on May 13th, 1995, as reproduced in “Enactment of “the Prevention of Influx of Foreign National Bill” Necessary to preserve unity & Integrity of the country, in BJP Today, June 1-15, 1994; pp 20.

Further, the definition of India as the legitimate 'home' of the Hindus is important here, since "(w)hen a Hindu is forced out of Pakistan or Bangladesh he is in a sense returning home. But when a Muslim comes from either of these two countries he is leaving his chosen home."¹²²

Within the BJP discourse, a unified (Hindu) Indian nation requires a strong, centralized state that would guard against the fissiparous and divisive (Islamic) threats, both from within and from outside. The BJP attempt to capture state power builds on this particularistic construction of the Hindu/Indian nation.

Conclusion: Ideological Hegemony through State Power and Civil Society

This chapter showed how the contemporary Hindu nationalist attempt to reconstruct the meaning of 'secularism' also involves a construction of the Indian 'nation' that depends on interpellating Hindus in a particular way. This process of cultural reconstruction is central to the project of contemporary Hindu nationalism. The 1998 elections recently brought a BJP government to power. But, as the previous chapter showed, the communalisation of state institutions (such as the police, the judiciary) has been in slow progress for some years now. Even as the BJP has made significant headway in wresting state power and influencing the tone of political debate, there are

¹²² Mohan Guruswamy, "The Acute Problem of Illegal Migration from Bangladesh to India," in BJP Today, Oct 16-31, 1995; pp 8. This is the basis on which the BJP distinguishes between 'refugees' who are Hindus facing persecution in Islamic countries and 'infiltrators' who always turn out to be Muslims. For eg. some articles expand the list of countries from which 'infiltration' occurs to include Pakistan and Afghanistan, and one article included Jordan and Lebanon as well. (See Statement issued by M.Venkiah Naidu, All India General Secretary, BJP on 25 June, 1995, reproduced as "'Infiltration' and 'Terrorism': twin dangers facing the Nation", in BJP Today, July 1-15, 1995: 23 and Speech made by K.L.Sharma, member of parliament, BJP to the Rajya Sabha on April 29, 1994, reproduced as "Prevention of Influx of Foreign Nationals in the Country Bill 1991" in BJP Today, May 16-31, 1994: 8-11.) It is interesting that even though BJP leaders will claim that they don't oppose Bangladeshi infiltration because the infiltrators

also much more subtle forces at work in civil society (reflected for instance in the communalisation of the media that I had pointed to in the previous chapter, and in the educational system as I will note below) that are perhaps much more effective in the project of cultural reconstruction. It is here that the BJP links to its affiliated organizations like the RSS and VHP are crucial.

While the BJP attempts to gain state power, these other organizations do much of the grassroots work in this process of cultural reconstruction. The RSS in particular has always recognized the much more important work of constructing the '*Hindu Rashtra*' (Hindu nation) prior to building a '*Hindu Rajya*' (Hindu state).¹²³ But these other organizations also recognize, especially more recently with the rising electoral successes of the BJP, that the capture of the state can be very useful in the building of the nation. A Bajrang Dal activist noted that a BJP government at the centre would be the quickest way to establish a '*Hindu Rashtra*'. The VHP, recognizing how the state can be used toward that end, released a '*Hindu agenda*' before the 1996 elections that included proposals for compulsory teaching of Sanskrit, Indian culture and religion in all educational

are 'Muslim', the above list shows that such 'infiltrators' always come from Muslim states. (See K.R. Malkani, "Understanding the BJP" in *BJP Today*, June 1-15, 1994; pp 21)

¹²³ Many authors have compared the rise of Hindu nationalism with fascism. This is one of the bases on which Jaffrelot distinguishes between fascism and the Hindu nationalism of an organisation like the RSS. In his words, "(a)n important difference between this totalitarianism and fascism in its various forms of Nazism is that the Indian version chose to work patiently on society over a long period rather than seizing power and constraining society 'from above'." (Jaffrelot, 1993, 51) On being asked what the difference was between the RSS and Hitler's Nazi organization, Golwalkar, who was the primary ideologue of the RSS, criticized the Nazi urgency of capturing state power. "Hitler's movement centred round politics. It is many times found that many are gathered for political purpose. But when that purpose failed, unity is lost. We do not want any temporary achievement but an abiding oneness. And so we have kept ourselves aloof from politics." (quoted in Ritu Kohli, *Political Ideas of M.S. Golwalkar*, Deep & Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1993) The RSS projects itself as an 'apolitical' organization (even though that draws on a very narrow definition of politics), and concentrates on long-term, grassroots programmes.

institutions, and the rewriting of the country's history by "honest, patriotic and learned" historians.¹²⁴

This simultaneity of the 'war of movement' with the 'war of position' is, I believe, fundamental in understanding the politics of contemporary Hindu nationalism. In many ways, it has become easier to accept the BJP as 'moderate' simply because it is easy to dismiss these other affiliated organizations as 'extremist'. Hence the organic connections between the different faces of Hindu nationalism that I had pointed to in chapter six are crucial to understanding the process through which the BJP is creating a new ideological hegemony.¹²⁵

The Morality of Ideology

It is interesting to see how much the BJP itself recognizes the role of 'ideology', and its own work in the ideological realm.

"For the Bharatiya Janata Party what is of even greater significance than the remarkable growth it has achieved is the qualitative change it has brought about in the nature of political competition in India. *The Bharatiya Janata Party has succeeded in adding an ideological dimension to the electoral contest*, and to political polemics...elections were essentially a power struggle between the political haves and the political have nots. Ideology was irrelevant to the confrontation."¹²⁶

¹²⁴ From "Newsnotes", India Today, Feb 15, 1996; pp 20. Sanskrit has always been imagined as the unifying language of the Hindu/Indian nation (See for eg. Savarkar, ibid and Golwalkar, ibid). The BJP election manifesto also talks of the need to encourage the study of Sanskrit as part of strengthening "Our Identity, Our Culture". (BJP Election Manifesto, BJP Publication No. E/3/96, New Delhi, 1996; pp 69) I will shortly talk about how BJP political power has been used in the educational sphere.

¹²⁵ Most analyses that look explicitly at the offensive face of Hindu nationalism focus on these other organizations where aggressive, militant, crude statements are abundant. My own collection of RSS and VHP material also provided a largesse of such statements. However, I chose to focus much more on BJP discourse to show how the 'moderate' face of Hindu nationalism piggy-backs on those ideas in the process of effecting much wider and more effective discursive rearticulations.

¹²⁶ L.K. Advani, "'Hindutva' is the 'Ideological Mascot' of BJP" in BJP Today, April 1-15, 1994; 4-6 (my italics).

Ideology is morally sanctified because it is *not* about gaining state power. Ideology here is defined as a 'political vision', and the BJP lays claim to the morality of possessing a political vision. Hence it is able to lay claim to state power while seeming disinterested in state power. But the BJP also recognizes that it alone cannot claim that moral high ground.

“The motivating force behind a political party is naturally its ideology...I can say that the Marxists and the BJP, right from their inception to their working, including whatever small aberrations there may have been have stood by their ideology...As for the Congress, ever since 1947 it has never been a party based on any kind of ideology. Within four or five years of independence, it became merely a platform for winning elections.”¹²⁷

But even though some of the moral ground is ceded to the communists, the ultimate moral test becomes 'authenticity'. This claim to authenticity, the claim to authentic Indianness, as we have seen throughout this chapter, is the underlying foundation in all aspects of BJP discourse.

“The communists also had a philosophy once. But with the collapse of communism all over the world, it has fallen flat on its face. Had the communists Indianised Marxist theory – as Mao Sinoized it in China and Ho Chi Minh nationalised it in Vietnam – they could have had some hope. But having failed to do that, they do not have any credible ideology to move the masses.”¹²⁸

But the moral and authentic high ground that the BJP repeatedly claims has consequences. Thus, when the BJP, as a political party tries to make occasional compromises, it usually brings forth a strong response from within the ranks of Hindu nationalism. In the light of increasing complaints within the party over the dilution of the Hindutva stance, party president L.K. Advani has felt it necessary to reiterate, “Hindutva

¹²⁷ Pramod Mahajan, “Only BJP and CPI(M) have stood by ideology” in BJP Today, Jan 1-15, 1995; pp 21-23.

is the BJP's ideological mascot – the most distinctive feature of its ideology and approach.”¹²⁹ This is particularly true of the Hindu/Muslim issue. Occasional attempts by the BJP to tone down the Mandir (temple) issue or its strident anti-Muslim stand before elections usually evokes a sharp reaction. For instance, in discussing election strategies, there is sometimes talk of making certain overtures to the Muslim community, but often such proposals are rejected on the ground that it would make the BJP appear like any other “pseudo-secular party out to appease the Muslims.”¹³⁰ Hence attempts by the party to diversify issues by giving prominence to more serious socio-economic problems and shed its militant “saffron image” (indicating religious overtones) is often defeated at party meetings, especially with RSS and VHP leaders. One such meeting for instance debated the ‘we’ (Hindus) and ‘they’ (Muslims) factor. The conclusion of that meeting was that any attempt to woo Muslims should be discarded.¹³¹ Similarly, compromises made in the attempts to build a “common minimum program” with other electoral allies brings rumblings from within the BJP as well as from RSS-VHP hardliners who argue that such compromises rob the BJP of its “cutting edge” which give it its distinct ideological character.¹³² Hence even if governance might require

¹²⁸ K.R. Malkani, “The Secret of BJP’s Success” in BJP Today, Oct 16-31, 1995: 19-20.

¹²⁹ Yubaraj Ghimre, “Stretching the Hindutva Plank”, India Today, Apr 15, 1994; pp 24.

¹³⁰ From Yubaraj Ghimre, “A Congress Clone?” in India Today, Oct 31, 1993; pp 49. Also see Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, “Question Marks of 1998”, in India Today, Dec 15, 1997: 28-30 for examples of such attempted overtures.

¹³¹ See the coverage of a Deen Dayal Research Institute-sponsored meeting by Yubaraj Ghimre, “Ram Is Still Best” in India Today, Dec 31, 1993; 22-24.

¹³² N.K. Singh, “On a Wing and a Prayer”, India Today, May 31, 1996: 12-19. This ‘dilution’ of ideology occurs when concessions are made to regional allies, such as in the toning down of the uniform civil code issue as a concession to the Akalis who are opposed to a common code. (See Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, “Power Bonding”, India Today, July 7, 1997: 22-23; See also Narendar Pani, “Regional Nationalism: Challenge to National Parties”, Times of India, May 16, 1996 for a discussion of the problems that a party with a strong ideology like the BJP has in expanding regionally.) The press is also quick to note such dilutions. As an article in India Today points out, BJP leaders no longer worry about highlighting the party’s “distinctiveness” and while in 1991 Advani spoke in terms of the BJP’s “majestic isolation”, now he says

temperance, the strong connections of the party to the “moral ideologues” of Hindu nationalism keep it true to its particularistic and hegemonic vision.

Education and History in the Construction of Ideological Hegemony

It is interesting in that light to see how much the BJP does recognize the ability to use political power in the ‘war of position’ to work on institutions within civil society. The importance of institutions of education as ‘ideological state apparatuses’ is implicitly recognized by the BJP in waging this ideological battle. This is evident for instance in the revision of history textbooks in keeping with Hindutva ideology in the states in which the BJP held political power. A 15 member steering committee under historian Bipan Chandra appointed by the central government in 1992 to evaluate school textbooks in various states found such distortions of history textbooks in the BJP run governments of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The committee found that these changes were “communal notions introduced deliberately and consciously.” Besides depicting all medieval conflicts in communal terms, the BJP-revised books blamed Muslims for all the evils that have afflicted Hindu society and glorified the role played by the RSS. In Madhya Pradesh textbooks for instance, a section subtitled “Communalism and its dangerous effects” was deleted and replaced with “Establishment of Indian organisations”, that eulogised “great leaders” such as Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar (first head of the RSS), and described the RSS as “a non-political organisation” that “is

that “a vast area of governance has nothing much to do with ideology. (See Swapan Dasgupta and Saba Naqvi Bhaumik, “Advantage BJP”, including interview with Advani: 12-19, India Today, Nov 3, 1997) Or that after the BJP had extended support to the BSP government in U.P., Vajpayee had said that governance was different from ideology. (see N.K Singh, “On a Wing and a Prayer”, India Today, May 31, 1996; pp 14) Sometimes, there is an occasional piece in the press that calls out to the BJP to stand up for its ideology. See Meenakshi Jain, “Will the Real Malkani Please Stand Up” in Times of India, July 29, 1996

involved in cultural development and social welfare activities of the country”.¹³³ Other changes in history textbooks have involved replacing the history of Aryan invasion with the theory that Aryans were the original inhabitants of India. Speaking on this issue, BJP leader Murli Manohar Joshi says:

“Although the theory of Aryan invasion of India is no longer tenable, and even western scholars do not subscribe to it, yet many textbooks failed to mention its infirmity. Perhaps no other theory has harmed the cause of national integration than this one. Attempts were made to inform the students about later developments in the field so that they could critically examine the entire evidence. This is how a sound academic foundation can be laid.”¹³⁴

In a similar vein, the BJP has presented its own set of historians and archaeologists to provide official validation of the existence of a Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya. This has been disputed strongly by other noted historians and archaeologists, including a group of noted historians from Jawaharlal Nehru University.¹³⁵ A BJP sympathiser accuses such historians who dispute the BJP claims at Ayodhya of being “Marxist apparatchiks masquerading as historians” who launch “propaganda offensives” and “relegate evidence to the footnotes of history and impose their spurious ideology as

for a very determined criticism of the BJP’s supposed new ‘softness’ in projecting Hindutva, and a call for “courage of conviction” to maintain ideological purity.

¹³³ See Manoj Mitta, “A Studied Bias” in *India Today*, Dec 31, 1994: 96-97. Recognizing this pivotal role of education in forming ideology and consciousness, a countermove to the BJP came in the form of a textbook that emerged under the aegis of the Left Front Government in West Bengal – “Outline of Political Science” – prescribed for the intermediate level and authored by West Bengal Higher Education Minister Satyasadhan Chakraborty and a professor, Nirmal Kanti Ghosh. One of the chapters in the book described the BJP as a “communal party” and drew an analogy with Nazi Germany: “Just the way Hitler stoked ultranationalism, the BJP is also out to create havoc.” (See “Newsnotes”, *India Today*, Sept 15, 1997; pp 11)

¹³⁴ Murli Manohar Joshi, “Reorienting Education” in *BJP Today*, July 1-15, 1994: 11-14.

¹³⁵ The World Archaeological Congress held in New Delhi in December 1994 was one of those unfortunate sites where this ‘conflict’ became especially bitter, involving physical abuse, between archaeologists and medieval historians with different political leanings trying to present their version of the ‘evidence’. See “Newsnotes”, *India Today*, Dec 31, 1994; pp 14

history itself".¹³⁶ Hindu nationalists have distributed a list of 3000 sites across the country at which Muslim conquerors allegedly demolished temples, some of which like at Kashi and Mathura have also become politicized. Hindu revisionists have claimed that many ancient Mughal monuments like the Taj Mahal and Qutub Minar, among many others, were actually pre-Islamic Hindu monuments later forcibly appropriated by Muslim rulers, adding Quranic verses and calligraphy to give them an Islamic character. Priests now chant Sanskritic verses in the Taj, small, cheap, plastic replicas of the Taj with a *Trishul* (a trident representing a Hindu symbol) replacing the crescent on top of the dome are sold outside the Taj, and in 1992 a mob of 30,000 Hindus burst into the monument with the intent to "capture" and "convert" it.¹³⁷

The rewriting of history and the use of educational institutions as sites for the 'making of Indians' is very important in the project of creating ideological hegemony. The BJP clearly recognizes how political power can be used toward that end, even as it works in conjunction with its many affiliated organizations who propagate Hindutva ideology through several channels and layers in society.

But Hegemony is always Incomplete...

This chapter argued that interpellating 'Hindus' in its construction of the Indian nation is also an attempt to reconstruct the meanings of 'secularism', on the grounds that a 'secular Hindutva' can best accommodate all religious differences. But such a

¹³⁶ Kanchan Gupta, "Secularists Justify Destruction of Temples", *BJP Today*, Sept 16-30, 1995; pp 21.

¹³⁷ See Brian K. Smith, 'Re-envisioning Hinduism and Evaluating the Hindutva Movement', *Religion*, 26, 1996: 119-12; Akbar Ahmed, "The History-Thieves: Stealing of the Muslim Past?", *History Today*, 43, Jan 1993: 11-13. Smith also points to attempts at 'linguistic cleansing', in which geographical places with non-Hindu names are being renamed, Delhi becoming 'Indraprasth', Lucknow renamed to 'Lakshmanpuri', Arabian and Indian Oceans called 'Sindhu Sagar' and 'Ganga Sagar' respectively, etc.

Hinduism is secular not because it can accommodate all religious differences, but because it hegemonizes such differences on its own terms. While the success of Hindu nationalism is predicated on the interpellation of this much wider Hindu community, it is this very interpellation that makes its supposed tolerance and secularism quite suspect. The claim of Hindu nationalists to represent a homogenous Hindu community with pre-given interests in the construction of a Hindu India is a hegemonic project that serves particular caste and class interests. To make a convincing case about the innate tolerance of Hinduism as a religion requires tapping into an upper-caste, middle-class Indian prejudice and naturalizing it as a 'fact' about Hinduism in general.¹³⁸ The attempt to redefine the idea of 'secularism' is an attempt to create a consensus around this hegemonic vision, concealing its exclusivity by speaking a language of tolerance and inclusiveness.

There are already various resistances to this vision from several quarters. A group like SAHMAT, composed of artistes, intellectuals, civil rights activists and others, has emerged specifically with the purpose of fighting the communalism propagated by the BJP and other organizations. A committee of social scientists, journalists and other leftist thinkers, called the BJP Government Watch (BGW), was formed with the explicit purpose of monitoring the BJP government. Even though in much political discourse in India, the Muslim community is presented as a monolith, voting en masse as a bloc, this is clearly not the case.¹³⁹ Yet, even though in a few situations where Hindu nationalism triumphed because the communalism of the Congress led Muslims away from the

¹³⁸ When asked about regional vs national loyalty, an opinion poll showed that the 'nation-above-all' idea is most strongly held by the urban male educated Hindu, or what the survey identifies as the HUM group, which is also a strong supporter of the BJP. See ICSSR-CSDS-India Today Poll, *India Today*, Aug 31, 1996: 28-43.

Congress¹⁴⁰, the Muslim community has by and large voted against the BJP, and the 1996 elections seemed to show that Muslims all over India voted tactically to defeat the BJP wherever possible.¹⁴¹ Despite occasional electoral tie-ups, parties such as the SP and the BSP that reflect the growing aspirations of the lower caste-class groups also forms another potential source of resistance to the upper caste-class hegemony represented by Hindu nationalist politics. The success of Hindu nationalism will depend on the extent to which it can appropriate or marginalize these resistances and succeed in articulating a wide set of caste, class, gender, ethnic, regional and linguistic identities and interests into an overarching 'Hindu identity'.

¹³⁹ See Imtiaz Ahmed, "The Muslim-Vote Myth" in India Today, Apr 30, 1996: 33.

¹⁴⁰ This for instance happened in the Maharashtra assembly elections in, which the Muslim anger at the Congress complicity in the Babri Mosque demolition at Ayodhya, split the vote in a way that brought the Shiv Sena to power. The Shiv Sena government's blatant anti-minority position – banning cow slaughter, disbanding the Minorities Commission, cracking down severely on Bangladeshi immigrants, and most shamefully, discontinuing the Srikrishna Commission set up to inquire into the riots targeted toward Muslims after the Babri Masjid demolition – put the community in a very difficult place. There was much apprehension in the Muslim community about a BJP government at the center. (See N.K.Singh, "Return of the Hindu Card", India Today, Oct 15, 1995; pp 47; Lekha Rattanani and Uday Mahurkar, "Searching for Security", India Today, Mar 31, 1995: 49; and Smruti Koppikar, "Fear and Distrust", India Today, May 31, 1996: 42-43)

¹⁴¹ See Asghar Ali Engineer, "How Muslims Voted", Economic and Political Weekly, May 25, 1996: 1239-1241.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Globalization, Modernity, Orientalism and Postcoloniality

As we were shopping in a Kashmiri store in Kodaikanal in Southern India, the shopkeeper felt it necessary to preface his attempts to persuade my family to buy his wares, with the statement, “we Kashmiris would much rather stay with India”. As I write these concluding thoughts on my dissertation, a battle is underway between India and Pakistan in the icy, mountainous terrain of Kargil in Kashmir. As the precarious caretaker BJP government, under the prime ministership of Atal Behari Vajpayee, celebrates Indian military triumphs, one also finds unleashed a renewed xenophobia against an ‘Islamic Pakistan’. Once again, Muslims in India are being asked to “prove” their loyalty. Never since the bygone days of the partition of the Indian subcontinent, the question of where Muslims belong has been more at the forefront of public-political discourse.

Whether or not this current BJP government survives the upcoming elections this year, the political place of Hindu nationalism has been established in ways that are now much more difficult to dislodge. As a political party the BJP is here to stay, whether in leading the reins of government, or as a significant force in the opposition. But more importantly, and not unlike the “New Labour” of Tony Blair that has in many ways inherited the mantle of Thatcherism, the politicization of contemporary Hindu nationalism has shifted the dominant agenda and discourse of Indian politics in ways that will likely be reflected through successor governments. This indeed is the triumph of hegemony (not of course without its resistances, that are many). It is this shift in public-political discourse that this dissertation has attempted to explore.

I would like to conclude this dissertation with an attempt at highlighting some of the categories (laid out in the title to the chapter) that have been critical in this study, teasing out in the process some provisional conceptualizations that have been central in the writing of this dissertation. In particular I would like to comment, through the use of some ‘instances’ in the cultural politics of Hindu nationalism, on (a) how one might understand ‘globalization through the articulation of the ‘global’ and the ‘local’ and (b) how one interrogates the political implications of third world religious nationalisms by working against the grain of Orientalism. Written in a self-consciously polemical and provocative style, my attempt in this reflective essay is to speak more explicitly to the political implications of Hindu nationalism in India (the ‘politics of ideology’), as well as the political implications of “theorizing religious nationalisms” (the ‘politics of epistemology’).

Let me begin by highlighting some of the interconnections between globalization, modernity and postcoloniality as expressed through the cultural nationalism of the BJP, and as elaborated on in this dissertation.

“Indians love Pepsi and hate Muslims”

Caricaturing the kind of response that Hindu Nationalism in India has elicited among the Hindu, urban, middle classes in India, I marvel and am dismayed at the multiplicity of ‘global’ discourses that makes that possible. Let me cull out some prominent ‘instances’ from the dissertation, adding some additional observations along the way.

1. Astonished to find references to Samuel Huntington’s “Clash of Civilizations” in BJP documents, it was remarkable to me how this emerging global discourse on the

“threat of Islam” (contributed to by several scholars and journalists writing about religious nationalisms in world politics) is drawn on to produce its own localized, quite context-specific, brand of the ‘Muslim other’ within India. As chapter three showed, the “truth value” of this global discourse on the ‘threat of Islam’ lies less in the material measure of this threat, and more in the enormous discursive power it has, which of course has real, material effects.

2. It is remarkable also to witness the spread of all that is hateful and loved about the globalized ‘American way of life’ (read Pepsi, Levis, KFC and Bay Watch) through the dissemination of the new liberalization dream in a country that once boasted of having the gumption to throw out IBM and Coca-Cola. It is important to remember here, as chapter four pointed out, that cultural imperialism does not run one-way, third world peoples are not passive recipients of products and images, but active agents in appropriating them and transforming them, ‘micro-marketing’ now does need to adapt ‘international’ products to local conditions, and ultimately, history (and hence modernity) is a product of the dynamic interaction of cultures (European and non-European). But at the end of the day ‘power’ still remains crucial. Even as we celebrate World Beat music in the West, the questions of “on whose terms” and “with what consequences” do we define those amorphous, dynamic, changing things called ‘culture’ and ‘modernity’ remain fundamentally important. To understand the workings of (cultural and material) power, lets take a leaf from the popular “soft-drink” industry in India: (a) it is surely the case that Sprite’s popularity in India over its local rival Limca lies less in its taste, and much in its image, notwithstanding the Sprite ad campaign “image is nothing, thirst is everything”, and (b) how might we

otherwise understand Coca-Cola's ability to "buy out" the other viable Indian competitor cola called Thums-Up. The BJP's attempt to recuperate and privilege the "superiority of Indian culture" over the "decadence of Western culture" has to negotiate this complicated terrain of global power as it operates in the local market that is India.

Let me also bring brief attention here to the gender dimension in this intersection of globalization and culture. How comfortably, for instance, does the integration of India into the international 'Beauty Pageant' circuit and the 'cosmetic capitalism' that accompanies it (with much celebration of the new aesthetics of emaciated, waify, Indian women winning the "Miss Universe" and "Miss World" titles), articulate with the new celebrations (and constructions) of 'tradition', 'family' and 'community' by Hindu nationalist discourse, whose burdens are also carried anew by women? Where and how does patriarchal global capitalism contradict, yet cohere, with local patriarchies?

3. There is also the articulation of globalization with 'postcoloniality', that chapter six elaborated on. Ultimately the BJP is successful because it plays on ambivalences better than any other political formation in contemporary India is positioned to do. Without forsaking liberalization (and going out of its way to woo foreign capital and foreign investors), it carries on with vehemence its rhetorical campaign against the ills of globalization, especially the "loss of India's distinctive place in the world" as India bends to the World Bank and the IMF, and "the loss of Indian culture" in the face of the flooding of the Indian marketplace with Western cultural products (M-TV, mini-skirts). Here we witness the quintessential postcolonial predicament – how to

balance ‘mimicry’ (the desire to be ‘modern’) and ‘authenticity’ (the desire to hold on and salvage ones ‘sense of self’). As the BJP speaks boldly of India becoming a “banana republic” as it integrates into the world, the anti-imperialist thrust of that message strikes a chord even in those who are otherwise disturbed by the party. As the BJP speaks of the “loss of Indian culture and values”, it speaks to the concerns and anxieties of the very middle-classes that both support the party and support (and benefit from) liberalization the most. And as the BJP claims the postcolonial desire to be ‘modern’ (mimicry), without being ‘Westernized’ (authenticity), it becomes a voice simultaneously of ‘modernity’ (read not backward and obscurantist, like those other “fundamentalist movements”), ‘resistance’ (“we can continue to stand up to the superpowers”) and ‘identity’ (what is distinctively Indian, read ‘Hindu’).

Modernization theorists, who are disheartened by the re-entry of religion (and all those other ‘backward things’) into public-political life, should be heartened at how familiar the ‘indigenous modernity’ that Hindu nationalism offers is!

4. Chapter four drew attention to the globalization of the ‘nation-state’ form, that despite all claims to the contrary, promises to stay with us, and stay with a vengeance. As chapter seven pointed out, the nation-state is a concept that (notwithstanding its genealogy) is integral to Hindu nationalist politics. That is the anchor that grounds the BJP’s construction of the “Indian (read Hindu) nation”, that is singular and ancient (and this claim is made by explicitly rejecting the theory that India is a multi-national state or the other more popular scholarly assertion that India is a post-colonial invention). Further, the ‘nation’ has remained forever and from times immemorial Hindu, separate from the ‘state’ that has been occupied by several forces

(but most dangerously by the Muslims). This clear recognition of the distinctions between the 'nation' and the 'state' within the Hindu nationalist discourse was of some surprise to me. There is a debate within Hindu nationalism on whether it makes more sense to build or rather unify the Hindu nation (*Rashtra*) before capturing state (*Rajya*) power (as a corrective to "Hitler's failure", noted by one early Hindu nationalist ideologue!) or to capture the state (as the BJP now did) to be used in building the nation. It was eerie discovering this version of Gramsci ("war of movement" vs. "war of position") in these sinister places! There are other dimensions to this nation-state discourse, territoriality being one of them (despite the complications of the ever-rising importance of the diaspora), in demarcating the 'self' from the 'other'.

If Roland Robertson is correct that the universalization of the 'nation-state form' (the "particularization of universalism"), along with the universalized expectation that the nation-state must stake its claim-to-fame on the grounds of a unique and distinct identity (the "universalization of particularism") is the product of globalization, then the BJP's rise to power does this globalized norm quite proud!

5. There is also the spread of 'modern democracy', conceptualized in its liberal-democratic expression, attributed by many as another aspect (and cause for celebration) of globalization. India has through over half-century of independence retained its proud place as the "world's largest democracy". Yet, as we saw in chapter six, it is in many ways the spread and "maturing" of Indian democracy that makes possible the emergence (as a significant electoral player) and the success (as a conservative response to the politicization of marginal caste-class groups) of the BJP

in contemporary postcolonial Indian politics. And it is this (nuclearized) 'liberal democracy' that is now engaged in a military conflict in Kashmir with another (nuclearized) 'liberal democracy'. Is that the failure of 'democratic peace' or 'deterrence'?

6. Finally there is the spread of the global discourse on 'human rights' touched on only very briefly in chapter seven, that notwithstanding its genealogy, is used with much vigour to taint the 'backward' Muslim community in India. Here the gender dimension is inescapable, because 'women's rights' for good or bad, takes the undisputed pride of place here. The Muslims, tell us our Hindu ideologues, know little and care little about 'gender equality', even as "dowry deaths", "widow abuse", and other countless atrocities scream within the Hindu community. And Hindu women, for all the caste, class and other divisions among them, celebrate this privileged sense of self vis-à-vis their Muslim, 'victim' sisters.¹

Understanding 'Globalization' through 'Global-Local Articulations'

Understanding the dynamics of globalization has been a theme that has run through this entire dissertation. At one level, it seems to me that globalization is becoming the new 'meta-narrative' in the discipline of International Relations. Yet, there seems to be a lack of conceptual rigour in understanding the dynamics of the process. At some level, globalization seems to be everything. It is at once threatening to the nation-state and reproductive of it. It is simultaneously homogenizing and fragmenting of

¹ Here I find that Chandra Mohanty's analysis on the self-presentation of the 'liberated' first world white feminist vis-à-vis her 'oppressed' third world sister translates rather well in this different localized context. See Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", in

identities, collectivities, selves, subjectivities. Its dimensions spill our categories – the aggressive spread of ‘economic’ restructuring (the end of history and the triumph of capitalism), the spread of ‘political’ liberal democracy (predicted to bring an end to wars), the production of old and new ‘cultural’ hegemonies. Globalization creates new possibilities (transnational solidarities, internet nationalisms) and curtails others. It simultaneously empowers and disempowers. With the celebrations and euphoria of a “new global order/village” is the emerging evidence of rising global, regional and national inequalities and the new conflicts that abound around the world.

Yet, in spite of this “catch-all” quality, it seems to me that the category itself remains useful (even if inadequate) as a way of capturing certain kinds of global logics. But it also seems to me that even as these logics have taken on a certain force and intensity in the contemporary world, it is becoming increasingly difficult to understand these logics (in their positive or negative aspects) from outside of their ‘local’ contexts. In other words, it seems to me that one of the most useful ways of understanding the dynamics of globalization is to study how it plays itself out at the level of the local. Each of the six instances from the dissertation that I highlighted above demonstrate the ways in which the global and the local articulate in and through the cultural politics of Hindu nationalism. While the global dimension remains crucial in each of the instances, what is striking are the ways that global discourses make possible, are appropriated by, responded to, and given expression through the cultural politics of the BJP. In many ways, this dissertation is premised on the claim that such global-local articulations can

only be understood empirically and contextually, and that is partially what I have attempted to do in my study.

Here I would like to add that in some ways, unlike those who have questioned the credibility of 'area studies' in the era of globalization, I believe that globalization paradoxically provides an opportunity for reclaiming the importance of area studies. Needless to say, such reclaiming must occur only through a serious rethinking of the field. At one level, it is clear that area studies must (and now can more easily) be unhinged from its cold war 'spheres of influence' priorities. At another level, such rethinking must occur by questioning the essentialist and Orientalist assumptions that has motivated much of area-specific work, especially within the Western academy. But the renewed significance of location/context/place makes it necessary to develop the kind of "grounded knowledges" that area-studies make possible.

Orientalism, Modernity and Postcoloniality

The rise of Hindu nationalism in India is a hegemonic project that serves particular caste and class (and gender) interests. The manner in which this hegemony has established itself by working on the "liberal-secular" sensibilities of middle-class India is indeed subtle and interesting. It is the subtlety of that process (the creation of a "common sense") that makes the political implications of the exclusivist project that motivates Hindu nationalism all the more dangerous. Yet, in the West, it is the politically pernicious aspect of religious nationalisms (assumed, rather than interrogated) that is used unquestioningly as one more way to taint the third world as the "unmodern" and the "backward". The representation of postcolonial religious nationalisms within the

Western academy and media as ‘anti-modern’, or ‘reactionary’ comes from this dismissive Orientalist ontology.

In addition to interrogating the political implications of Hindu nationalism in India, this dissertation has also questioned the political implications of this kind of Orientalist epistemology. At one level, this kind of epistemology fails to interrogate the context within which such discourses “make sense”. As each of the six instances above show, and as the dissertation has attempted to explore in detail, Hindu nationalism “works” by working on the ‘terrain of modernity’, responding to modernity, but not rejecting it, speaking to the modernist aspirations of ordinary Indians, and fulfilling Indian dreams to be modern. One of the central arguments of this dissertation has been that contemporary religious nationalisms remain *integrally connected* to modernity in a variety of ways. Why such discourses make sense cannot be understood without understanding this modern context. It seems to me that if one is serious about countering the pernicious political effects of Hindu nationalism in India, then this requires careful, contextual study that would yield such understanding. In other words, the effectiveness of any political resistance to Hindu nationalism depends on an adequate understanding of the context, which requires *going beyond* the ‘anti-modern’ rhetoric of its ideologues.

At another level, in the ‘conditions of postcoloniality’ in the third world, Orientalist representations of third world religious nationalisms makes political resistance to Hindu nationalism (and other third world religious nationalisms) all the more difficult.² In that sense, the position of the ‘West’ in the contemporary global-political economy imposes special burdens on scholarship that emerges from the West. It is to work against

the grain of Orientalism that it has seemed *necessary* in this dissertation in interrogating the political implications of religious nationalisms in the third world, to simultaneously deconstruct and unsettle the unproblematic celebrations of “Western Secularism”. It is to highlight how Orientalism thrives that I have shown at some length in this dissertation how much of the scholarly literature on the subject and journalistic accounts of the phenomenon often begin with well-intentioned assertions to talk about the ‘global’ resurgence of religious nationalisms, but often slide into the tendency to treat such occurrences as the rise of the Christian Right within the U.S. as somehow *peripheral* to Western modernity, and of Islamic ‘fundamentalism’ in the Middle East as somehow *essential* (pejoratively) to non-Western politics and life. My attempt to disturb the celebrations of Western secularism by pointing to how religion continues to undergird the politics of Western ‘secular’ democracies, is motivated in some part by the attempt to carry responsibly the burden of producing scholarship in the North American academy. In scholarship as in other kinds of political practices, resistance to Hindu nationalism in India has to be simultaneously waged at two levels – the local *and* the global.

² This is similar to the dilemma that peace activists opposing nuclearization in India and Pakistan have found themselves in the wake of the ethnocentric and racist responses in the West to the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests.

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