Exegesis in International Relations Theory: Examining faith and politics through a neo-classical realist analysis of South Asia

by

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Certification

I, CHADHA Astha (Student ID 61120601), hereby declare that the content of this dissertation is original and true, and has not been submitted to any other university or educational institution for the award of a degree or diploma. All information derived from other published / unpublished sources has been cited and acknowledged appropriately.

In accordance with Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University regulations, I hereby submit this dissertation with the approval of my supervisor, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Asia Pacific Studies, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University.

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List of Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini
AL	Awami League
BG	Bangladesh
BNP	Bangladesh Nationalist Party
B R Ambedkar	Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar
CAA	Citizenship (Amendment) Act
DHA	Discourse-Historical Approach
EMC	Economy, Military, and Communication
EPA	Enemy Property Act
IN	India
INC	Indian National Congress
IPT	International Political Theology
IR	International Relations (discipline/theory)
J L Nehru	Jawaharlal Nehru
LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
LFO	Legal Framework Order
LOC	Line of Control
M A Jinnah	Muhammad Ali Jinnah
M K Gandhi	Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
NCR	Neoclassical Realism
NEP	National Education Policy

OIC	Organization of the Islamic Conference
PK	Pakistan
PRASAD	Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SAFTA	South Asia Free Trade Agreement
SM	Strategic Mentality
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
V D Savarkar	Vinayak Damodar Savarkar
VPA	Vested Property Act

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Abstract

The biggest challenge religion poses in the international relations discipline (IR) and global politics is its unobtrusive presence, its unobservable processes, and its indiscernible effects on global politics. Another challenge posed by the study of religion in international relations discipline is to explain how and why states, as rational actors, make decisions that seem under-explained by the practical theoretical frameworks of the discipline. Also noteworthy is the way IR (theoretical) literature has defined and considered religion: caged in certain dimensions and constrained to specific roles. This research aims to address the challenges and propose a possible way to incorporate religion into international relations theory. The dissertation, after categorizing existing literature into three main trends, critically analyzes seminal works within each of the categories to highlight the gaps in the existing literature on religion as a factor in IR theory and international relations in general. The dissertation mainly raises two broad research questions: How can religion (exegesis) be factored in IR theory and international relations? How has religion impacted and shaped South Asian international relations? To answer these questions, the research proposes the concept of exegesis and defines it as an *"interpretation of religion as a historical discourse"* instead of a spiritual or supernatural/metaphysical discourse. The dissertation argues that the operationalization of religion through exegesis in the framework of Neoclassical Realism (NCR) not only provides an explanation of what religion (potentially) does in the international system but also demonstrates a way to define, characterize and do history in IR, particularly NCR. Through the case study of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh in South Asia, the dissertation attempts to explain how exegesis affects state identity, memory, and official history, that in turn has the potential to alter state behavior as well as characterize inter-state relations. The dissertation conducts three analyses and makes three key conclusions about the

impact of religion (exegesis) in state policy and inter-state-relations. First, by examining

contested histories and state narratives through school textbooks, the research argues that

exegesis has an impact on contested memories and religion-based national identities, that in turn

lead to conflicting official histories in South Asia despite shared past. Second, the research

examines the religion-secularism dyad and argues that the partitions of British India into India,

Pakistan, (and later) Bangladesh provided a fertile ground for seeking ontological security

through distinct identities, mainly based on religion. Exegesis revealed that the reason for the

religious definition of secularism (distinct from Western secularism) in these nations was an

incomplete historical process of establishing post-colonial modern states. Third, the research

examines the foreign policies of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. It argues that in foreign policy,

religion (through exegesis) operates distinctly in two ways: implicitly as 'religion in foreign

policy' towards peacebuilding and cooperative efforts, and explicitly as 'religious foreign policy'

to assert religious identity and disagreements with neighbors.

Key words: religion, IR, Neoclassical realism, history, South Asia, foreign policy, secularism,

India, Pakistan, Bangladesh

Chapter 1
Outlining the Research on Religion in International Relations

1.1. Introduction to the research

Religion has been closely intertwined with customs, traditions, social practices, culture, and politics. At the same time, it claims to coexist in the supernatural, non-material, and the non-temporal realms- it speaks of what cannot be experienced in the material world. Religion has proved to be a resilient presence in the worldviews, politics, national identities, policy, and social life in several nations across the globe, though to varying degrees. Religion has also found itself being discussed in inter-state relations, which is usually considered a secular space of politics, diplomacy, and strategy. Though the presence of religion in a nation's politics does not indicate the religious affiliation of the whole population, however, it reflects how a certain nation behaves and chooses to define itself, as well as distinguishes itself from the others beyond its borders.

Within the international relations discipline, religion has largely found itself sidelined, except for some theoretically and methodologically diverse studies conducted after the tragic events of 9/11 (Fox & Sandler, 2004a; Hanson, 2006; Haynes, 2008; Petito & Hatzopoulos, 2003; Thomas, 2000b). However, just like in politics, religion has not entered the international relations discipline peacefully; it has forced its way into the international relations theory that still struggles to accommodate it. Researchers have pointed out how religion crept into the global political discussions post-Cold War, after the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Luoma-aho, 2009). The Iranian revolution and the events of 9/11 secured the place of religion, terrorism, *Jihad*, and

religious fundamentalism in international relations discussions (Hanson, 2006; Sandal & Fox, 2013; Thomas, 2005). That being said, a large body of literature in international relations focuses on appropriating religion without defining it and finding it in politics; what some of these studies are referring to, as a result, is the political religion, and not religion itself. The ones interested in theology, have discussed religious international relations theory, questioned the religion-secular binary, or argued that international relations is not too far from being a religious discipline with concepts of state and sovereignty drawing heavily from theology (Kubálková, 2003; Luoma-aho, 2009; Troy, 2012).

A common assumption by several of these studies is that all religions are fundamentally the same and that if international relations can incorporate one religion, it can create space for other religions too; here, the latter assumption flows from the former. The problem, however, is that the category of 'religion' might indicate that all religions are the same, however, that need not be true. Religion might mean different things to different people, and that has not been addressed by many studies. Similarly, the category of 'secular' finds its roots in Christian ideals and need not be opposite to 'religion' as commonly assumed in the international relations frameworks wherein the religion-secular binary describes an antagonistic power relationship (Fitzgerald, 2011).

In the Western conception of modern nation-states, secular is an invented category and so is religion: while a modern state has secular characteristics that oversee church-state separation, religion is intuitively supposed to withdraw from temporal politics and eventually become irrelevant. But religion has not withdrawn into oblivion and continues to be relevant in politics (Petito & Hatzopoulos, 2003). This throws a challenge for international relations theories to explain the counterintuitive. Religion has also been held responsible for eroding secular ideals in

domestic politics, fueling violence, and creating divisions among groups and communities in all parts of the globe on one hand, while opening up possibilities for conflict resolution, and peacebuilding on the other hand. The overall impact on international relations scholarship has been limited but sufficient to encourage studies that look beyond conventional theories and approaches, to look into the role religion plays in global politics and diplomacy. But more importantly, religion is a unique puzzle for the discipline; it challenges the discipline to expand, explain and evolve with affairs that are not temporal.

While religion's presence in society is not disputed, its significance in international relations or global affairs and the severity of its challenge to the largely 'secular' international relations discipline (IR) is debatable. In fact, the biggest challenge religion poses in the IR and global politics is its unobtrusive presence (if acknowledged at all), its unobservable processes, and its indiscernible effects on global politics, which manifests only as outcomes rather than causes of those noticeable outcomes (Chadha, 2022a). Also noteworthy is the way IR (theoretical) literature has defined and considered religion: caged in certain dimensions and constrained to specific roles. While Huntington (1996) started the debate on civilizational conflicts, several studies in the past few decades have contested the validity of not only the 'warring' civilizations thesis but also how to incorporate religion in IR (Fox & Sandler, 2004a; Petito & Hatzopoulos, 2003; Thomas, 2000a). Fewer studies discuss, in-depth, various theoretical challenges that different groups of scholars have tried to tackle in IR and the main gaps in those studies.

Consequently, there is little discussion on how two states with the same state religion could act differently. If democratic nations have a certain behavior that conforms to globally accepted norms, does having a state religion define a distinct state character? A vast category of

culture, or modern category of democratic institutions cannot sufficiently answer why, then, those two nations mimic each other at certain points in history, while not at other times. Does religion impact how a nation views itself and its neighbors through a different perspective of its history? This research aims to address the challenge and propose a possible way to incorporate religion into international relations theory.

Another challenge facing the study of religion in international relations discipline has been explaining how and why states as rational actors, make decisions that seem under-explained by the practical theoretical framework of the discipline. Brooks (2003) has argued that a cost-benefit analysis or a game theory analysis has previously been unable to explain religious motivations within a secular international relations discipline while leaving policymakers puzzled:

> Over the past twenty years domestic-policy analysts have thought hard about the roles that religion and character play in public life. Our foreign-policy elites are at least two decades behind. They go for months ignoring the force of religion; then, when confronted with something inescapably religious, such as the Iranian revolution or the Taliban, they begin talking of religious zealotry and fanaticism, which suddenly explains everything. After a few days of shaking their heads over the fanatics, they revert to their usual secular analyses. We do not yet have, and sorely need, a mode of analysis that attempts to merge the spiritual and the material (Brooks, 2003, p. 27).

That leaves behind the question, why do states have a state religion, when modern states have been assumed to push religion into private spaces? South Asia, in this respect, presents an

interesting case. The region, comprising the Indian subcontinent has seen a clash of civilizations, religious wars, and intermingling of cultures followed by a long period of colonial experience before the eventual formation of modern states.

Today, the region has several states that were imagined secular but today have a state religion, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. On the other hand, secular states have a visibly strong influence on religion as in India and Nepal. How does religion impact politics within and among these states? Is religion only a tool for politics and a legitimizing force for non-state actors? Among these states, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh were the same political entity until 1947, but their establishment as separate states, thereafter, has been followed by a tumultuous history of rivalry and calculated cooperation, consistently feeding into regional instability. The region comprises over 24% of the global population, with two nuclear powers locked in inter-state rivalry. How does religion impact relations in South Asia? This research investigates these questions and attempts to explain the significance of religion in South Asian international relations through the case study of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

This dissertation seeks to fill the gaps highlighted above by proposing a different review of the existing IR literature, i.e., in light of key trends in the IR's quest to incorporate religion into existing theories or newer frameworks. Then, the dissertation aims to offer a different theoretical framework for the analysis of religion in IR, which allows for religion to be studied for its impacts on IR theory and international relations. The dissertation then offers an empirical case study of South Asia to demonstrate both, how religion has impacted inter-state relations as well as how religion has in turn responded to international relations in the South Asian context.

1.2. The answers the dissertation seeks

The dissertation, after categorizing existing literature into three main trends, critically analyzes seminal works within each of the categories to highlight the gaps in the existing literature on religion as a factor in IR theory and international relations in general. This section presents the main research questions and objectives of the dissertation.

1.2.1. Research Questions

The dissertation mainly raises two broad research questions based on the literature review: one theoretical and one empirical, as listed below:

1. Theoretical: How can religion (exegesis) be factored into IR theory and international relations?

2. Empirical: How has religion impacted and shaped South Asian international relations?

   2.1. How has religion impacted the mutual perceptions in South Asia among the triad of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh?

   2.2. What conflicts/convergences in post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, are caused by religion?

   2.3. How has religion manifested in foreign policies? How that, in turn, has impacted regional/inter-state security architecture in South Asia?

1.2.2. Research Objectives

The main objectives of this research are as follows:

1. Operationalizing religion in international relations, i.e., theorizing religion in IR as well as international relations through the concept of exegesis proposed and developed in this research.

2. Explain how religion and history are analogous, and how understanding this relationship through the concept of exegesis can incorporate religion into IR theory

3. Taking the case of South Asia, explaining how nations understand themselves and the 'other' in the neighborhood, as an outcome of their distinct comprehension of shared history.

4. Taking the case of South Asia to explain the diverse 'secularisms' that exist in the region; secularism is not a binary of religion, and neither is it similar to the Western idea of secularism within the framework of religion.

1.3. Contribution and Limitations of the study

1.3.1. Originality and Contributions

The dissertation aims to provide some contribution to the existing research on religion in the international relations discipline.

1. The main contribution is that the dissertation uses an existing theoretical framework and uses a new methodological tool to enable the operationalization of religion in IR theory and international relations.

2. Additionally, the dissertation aims to expand the long-term predictive/explanatory power of the Neo-classical realist framework through the addition of 'exegesis',

which is defined and developed in the dissertation to not only examine religion but also examine the secularism(s) in the research.

3. Moreover, religious characterization of South Asian international relations as explained by the concept developed in the dissertation, has not been done before to explain how a different understanding of religion and history could impact foreign policy. This dissertation aims to serve as an attempt toward the same within the IR.

1.3.2. *Limitations of the Study*

While the dissertation aimed at providing an alternative theoretical and methodological pathway to study religion in IR theory and international relations, there are certain limitations. The research can be located within the larger IR theoretical framework of neo-classical realism and does not consider religious theories that have their own merits. The reason is that most of the religious IR theories restrict the framework in the same way the assumed secular nature of IR theory and international relations restricts the study of religion within secular IR. However, further studies into the nature of religion and IR might not only improve IR but also challenge it, at times proving it insufficient to handle constantly changing factors such as religion. Acknowledging such theoretical and methodological limitations might provide a pathway to include other theories from outside the discipline, in IR (some works discussed in the second chapter, have attempted the same).

Additionally, the research is concentrated on the case study of South Asia, particularly the populous and larger states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. However, the same framework of analysis can be expanded to study not just other states in the region, but also other regions

such as the Middle East, South America, and Europe to analyze the increased visibility of religion in their domestic or regional spheres.

Although each of these regions might have a dominant religion- Islam in the Middle East, Orthodox/Catholic Christianity in South America, and Protestants/Catholics in Europe, each of them also has the conflicting presence of other religions such as Judaism, Sunni/Shia Islam, and Indic religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, or new age religions, etc., that constantly challenge social, cultural, and political practices in those regions. Eventually, the aim should be to have space for religion/secular in IR theory and international relations, as it emerges significant and enhances the explanatory power of (new and existing) IR theories, rather than let it retreat once more in IR for its abstract vastness and the challenge it flings at the discipline while 'resurging' again unobtrusively.

1.4. Structure of the dissertation

The structure of the dissertation and the key arguments of the chapters are presented as follows:

Chapter 1- Outlining the Research on Religion in International Relations

This chapter introduces the research background and throws light on the originality and contributions of this research, along with the limitations of the same. It then lays out the research objectives, research questions as well as the structure of the dissertation.

Chapter 2- Literature Review (Review of Religion in International Relations theory)

This chapter argues that key works in the field can be classified according to where they place religion in (existing) IR. Three important developments in the IR scholarship as thus proposed: i) studies incorporating Religion in traditional IR theory, ii) Religious IR theories/approaches and frameworks of analysis, and iii) finding secular in the post-secularizing IR. The chapter examines the above trends in detail and critically analyzes each development, followed by a brief discussion on the methodological avenues for studying different religions under the same framework.

Chapter 3- Theory and Methodology (How to do religion: operationalizing Religion in IR theory and international relations)

This chapter addresses the first research question and contends that what is missing so far in the literature is a link that connects religion, and secularism in a process within IR that enables the operationalization of religion at all levels of politics that could impact international relations. The chapter then argues that exegesis provides the link between studying religion as a factor affecting IR theory and international relations, while in turn, being affected by global politics. Sections in the chapter offer discussion on the theoretical and methodological frameworks for the dissertation.

Chapter 4- History at crossroads: Exegesis and politics in education

This chapter discusses how despite their shared culture and history, the divisive identity and memory politics succeeded in separating India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, i.e., states carved out of constructed identities. By examining contested histories and state narratives through school textbooks, the chapter demonstrates how national identities have been reinforced time and again through state narratives that had begun to be popularized by the political elite much before

the partition of British India. These contested memories and religion-based national identities, the chapter argues, are one of the fundamental reasons behind the failures of any reconciliation process or regional harmony in South Asia.

Chapter 5- To be or not to be: Examining the different secularism(s) in South Asia

The destabilizing impacts of the 1947 partition of British India caused inter-state insecurity, arising from vulnerabilities and anxieties of the newly crafted modern independent states of India and Pakistan. Amid religious riots, 'secular' state identities were proposed as a solution to the issue of religion. The decades following the partition witnessed more bilateral armed conflicts over the disputed territories of partition, including the one in 1971, leading to the independence of Bangladesh from West Pakistan. Bangladesh was envisioned as a secular state too. While religious minorities exist in the three nations, their survival and progress are heavily dependent on whether the state identity accommodates their religious/cultural differences. That leads to the question: how has religion impacted the post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh? But also, and more importantly, how do these three states understand, define, and envision their secularism(s)? This chapter examines secularism(s) in the three nations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh and argues that the partitions of South Asia's three most populous nations provided a fertile ground for seeking ontological security through distinct identities, mainly based on religion. The key reason for this was the incomplete process of the establishment of separate modern states mainly, ruptured and marred by religious conflicts.

Chapter 6- Physical borders, religious territories: Case of South Asia

South Asia remains one of the most conflicted and least integrated regions in the world. The 1947 division of British India on religious lines neither settled the borders nor reconciled

issues over conflicting history. It is also a region of significant political instability and probable security conflicts due to the presence of three neighboring nuclear powers. While seeking the answer to the question-How religion has impacted the South Asian regional (in)stability and animosity among neighbors, this chapter examines the case of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh and charts out the role of religion in conflicts or cooperation among them. The chapter argues that in foreign policy, religion operates distinctly in two ways-namely-implicitly as 'religion in foreign policy' and explicitly as 'religious foreign policy'. While the former is employed for peacebuilding and cooperative efforts, the latter is employed to assert identity and disagreements with neighbors.

<u>Chapter 7- Conclusion: The way ahead with/despite religion in international relations</u>

This chapter concludes the research by summarizing the findings of the preceding chapters. The research focused on a key theoretical and overarching empirical question focused on South Asia. This chapter also looks back at the proposed theoretical conception of religion, and the implications of empirical research on the proposed concept, including insights and limitations of the concept. It then offers avenues for further research.

Chapter 2

Review of Religion in International Relations Theory[1]

2.1. (Re)looking at the overlooked dimension in International Relations

Religion has been considered an "overlooked dimension in the international relations theory or the disciple as a whole (denoted as IR) despite its salient presence in the observable international relations on the ground (denoted as ir) (Chadha, 2022a). As Haynes (2021) has argued, the inclusion or consideration of religion as a factor affecting foreign policy has closely followed the developments in the actual world. Theoretically, this highlights two main trends- one, the exclusion of domestic politics, and thus religion in domestic politics in the IR theory and international relations for decades, and two, also the western dominance over the discipline, which has been largely Eurocentric in part, due to the dominance of the West on international relations. Several studies have highlighted events such as the Islamic revolution in Iran, the 9/11 al Qaeda attacks in the US, or the larger US "war on terror" which has had widespread security and geopolitical consequences, particularly in the Islamic world.

The common factor in these developments is that they were accounted for in the IR theory and international relations since they greatly impacted the West. However, several other crucial historical events with heavy casualties of a certain religion such as the Kashmir conflict, the Sri Lankan war against Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, or Southeast Asian secessionist conflicts have not been as impactful in highlighting the 'resurgence' of religion in IR theory and

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international relations due to them being viewed as non-religious ideological, territorial, or political clashes, rather than being fueled by conflicting religious identities. This was despite the active continuous presence of religion in different geopolitical spheres in the global south or its regional politics, at least, if not world politics at large. In terms of IR scholarship, while religion is gradually gaining (some) acceptance as a dimension, there is less consensus on how something as vast as religion can be incorporated into the established 'secular' frameworks of IR.

One of the reasons is that the mainstream IR theories and approaches assume the secular character of states, which completely sidesteps religion in the discussion on global politics, while also complicating the inclusion of states with religion as their key identity and foreign policy. Moreover, studies have discussed the role of religious legitimacy in governments (Fox, 2018, pp. 69–70), wherein mention of religion in the dataset of 172 constitutions in 2008 is examined to reveal that "even among secular states, calling upon God or religion to bless a social contract" is not unheard of while 24.3% mandate God/religion being alluded to in official oaths. This according to scholars (Fox, 2018; Sandal & Fox, 2013), makes a significant minority of constitutionally secular countries derive legitimacy from religion or refer to the same in their constitutions too. Then, religion's overarching presence through non-state actors in domestic politics, and the relationship between their own goals compared to a state's national interests, further obscures the IR theory and international relations in being able to comprehensively view the mutual impacts of religion on global politics (Fox & Sandler, 2004b; Haynes, 2013a, p. 25).

Additionally, the Eurocentric IR, which sees a resurgence or return of religion in IR theory and international relations, does not account for other parts of the world- such as in the Middle East or South Asia, religion never left the realm of politics and has been ever present in identities, policies, and nationalisms. Thus, it is important to first examine the complex

relationship between 'religion' and 'secular' as terms, and how they need to be clearly defined in order to be incorporated into the analysis in IR theory and international relations.

2.2. Religion, the secular, and how they impact IR theory and international relations

Religion, in politics, is still an extremely complex term to define, just as in other disciplines, but what sets it apart in politics is the emphasis on how it affects human/state behavior instead of its larger function in explaining life beyond its observable form. Fox (2018, pp. 4–6) has examined several classical definitions of religion in political philosophy and highlighted that religion has been seen as a factor that unites communities, provides a way to comprehend the world, provides answers to existential queries for mankind, and sets forth what is sacred and divine (supernatural). He then provides his own definition combining all the above ideas and adding to them the roles religion plays in society (2018, p. 6):

> Religion seeks to understand the origins and nature of reality using a set of answers that include the supernatural. Religion is also a social phenomenon and institution which influences the behavior of human beings both as individuals and in groups. These influences on behavior manifest through the influences of religious identity, religious institutions, religious legitimacy, religious beliefs, and the codification of these beliefs into authoritative dogma, among other avenues of influence.

These attempts provide a step forward in the discussion about religion in that they try to offer a broader definition of an abstract concept that is only visible in practices, and observable outcomes. Some of these definitions also set religion apart from other ideologies, by

acknowledging the dimension of the 'supernatural' and 'spirituality' all of which can be related to religion but are not religion in themselves. However, what these definitions hide is the very nature of religion-which is intangible and flexible, i.e., constantly evolving and changing with the social and political structures around it (as the succeeding sections discuss).

While practical and observable international relations can only generate debates about religion and its significance through observable outcomes, and nation-states have been practicing foreign policy on mainly 'secular' principles (Haynes, 2021), IR cannot overlook the religious history of secularism. Moreover, secularism is a result of centuries of gradual change in Western international relations that has tried to separate religion from interfering in the material affairs of the state, culminating in the Peace of Westphalia (1648). While the church was distanced from the 'temporal' affairs of the world, 'secularism' was believed to have achieved the idea of freedom from religion, as well as the resolution of religious-identity-based conflicts among different Christian denominations in Europe. It was the de facto characteristic of (Eurocentric or Western) IR theory and international relations and went hand in hand with the idea of modernization wherein reason would prevail, and religion would retreat to private spaces.

'Secularism' moved beyond Europe through colonialism, but not without its challenges, one of which was the difference between the term in theory and practice on lands with a very different system of beliefs. Colonialism, created through the centuries of its evolution, led to a new power discourse, at times implying that European powers were far from exercising secular power in their colonies. In fact, religion at the time was allowed to be the dominant force during and after the end of the colonial period- such as the partition of Bengal during the British empire and the subsequent partition of British India into Muslim Pakistan and a secular Hindu-majority India.

It is not to suggest that secularism cannot thrive outside Europe. More nations claim to be secular in their constitutions in the world today, but what is crucial is to examine how they define secularism within their own socio-political contexts. Huntington (1996) has argued that regarding the separation of church (religion) and politics, there have been very different traditions surrounding spiritual and temporal authority. One instance of that is the presence of several churches after the establishment of the Church besides the state. Thus, the church-state conflict for power has not only defined Western civilization but also led to the distinct concept of 'freedom' in the West, in contrast to other civilizations.

> God and Caesar, church and state, spiritual authority and temporal authority, have been a prevailing dualism in Western culture. Only in Hindu civilization were religion and politics also so distinctly separated. In Islam, God is Caesar; in China and Japan, Caesar is God; in Orthodoxy, God is Caesar's junior partner. (Huntington, 1996, p. 70)

Some religions could be argued to be inherently (theoretically) more tolerant than others in terms of acceptance of a different faith framework or belief in a different deity(s), what cannot be contested is that the modern 'secular', in fact, has emerged from 'religion' (and hence sometimes thought of as a binary of religion). While the states with religious constitutions (such as Saudi Arabia) are far outnumbered by states with a separate constitution based on 'secular' values, the stronghold of religion is usually in the masses, in domestic politics rather than being enshrined in constitutions explicitly. The states, not only in the Middle East but also in South Asia for instance, are increasingly realigning and reformulating their national interest goals with religious concerns. It is not uncommon to find a religious definition of 'secular' which impacts

not just the laws of the land but also the levels the ground for identity-related clashes that often spill over into transborder or regional politics.

The revival of conversation in IR about the return of religion in international relations has had many implications. One is the very challenge of defining religion, and how it impacts politics at a domestic, regional, and global level. This has been addressed by scholars in recent times through scholarly inquiry and empirical studies on the roles of religion, not just through religious state actors but also non-state actors who affect international relations (Fox, 2018; Fox & Sandler, 2004b). Another challenge is defining secularism(s) and distinguishing between how it works to create an illusion of some form of 'equality' and 'fairness' while being perforated with discursive and normative power. IR scholarship has also begun discussion on how the secular has instrumentalized the return of religion, and how secularism has created awareness of the global transition to the post-secular. Habermas (2006) defines this awareness as a 'post-metaphysical thought' as a mode that combines knowledge of the 'finiteness of reason' as well as of a new opposite of 'secular' (which is not 'religious'):

> The secular counterpart to religious modernization is an agnostic, but non-reductionist philosophical position. It refrains on the one hand from passing judgment on religious truths while insisting (in a non-hostile fashion) on drawing a strict line between faith and knowledge. It rejects, on the other, a scientistically limited conception of reason and the exclusion of religious doctrines from the genealogy of reason. (Habermas, 2006, p. 16)

2.3. Categorizing and Critically analyzing Literature on religion in IR theory

Overall, religions (even in secular politics) can inform state actors or non-state actors in their decision-making and policy formulations, which in turn might have an (in)direct impact on how national interests, cooperation, and conflict are defined and conducted. That makes religion an indispensable factor in foreign policy and IR theory or international relations, wherever applicable.

This chapter seeks to provide a review of the existing literature in light of key trends in the IR's quest to incorporate religion into existing theories or newer frameworks. In that context, the chapter examines key works in the fields and proposes three important developments in the scholarship as follows:

1.   Incorporating Religion into IR theory

2.   Religious IR theories/approaches and frameworks of analysis

3.   Post-secularizing IR as a discipline

The subsequent three sections will examine the above trends in detail and critically analyze each development, followed by a brief discussion on the methodological avenues for studying different religions under the same framework.

2.3.1.   *Incorporating Religion into existing IR*

The IR scholarship especially since the 2000s, i.e., after the 9/11 attacks, began recognizing the 'return' of religion or religion-backed forces exercising influence over the security of other sovereign states. The increased visibility of religion has challenged the modernization and secularization theory, which both assumed the withdrawal of religion into

private spheres, stripping it of any political or even social significance. In the context of why religion has resurfaced in IR theory and international relations, this group of scholars has provided two core arguments:

- Secularism (understood as neutrality with relation to religion or lack of it) has been the dominant character of IR theory and international relations, since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, implying that religion receded into exile while secular European states emerged globally first through major revolutions (such as the French Revolution in 1789). Secularism was then made part of the colonies that subsequently became independent states after decolonization and continues to be so. One instance of this continuity is the Cold War which was a power battle fought between the two powers, i.e., the US and the Soviet Union representing secular ideologies of liberal democracy and capitalism versus communism, respectively.

- The return of religion has not happened explicitly in the foreign policy of states. Rather, it is noticeable in the rise of religious (non-state) actors that have gained global attention or recognition for their role in international relations, such as the Vatican (centralized Roman Catholic non-state actor), the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (formal cooperative mechanism headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia with 57 Muslim-majority member states), and the Al Qaeda (decentralized transnational network of extremists responsible for the 9/11 attacks). Thus, religion is only one of the several factors driving (conflictual) international relations.

Overall, the scholars have identified varying roles of religion (in varying degrees) on international relations and have incorporated different methodologies to study the impact of religion in IR theory and international relations. This implies that some of the most significant

works in this sub-field deserve to be examined individually to highlight their key arguments (and gaps within) before any generalization can be made about existing literature concerning religion and IR theory or international relations.

Fox & Sandler (2004) argued that the lack of avenues in Western IR to study religion in international relations, one needs to move beyond the discipline to others for interdisciplinary research because international relations cannot be "understood without taking religion into account" (2004a, p. 7). While the study has provided a good basis for why religion in IR theory and international relations needs to be examined and how IR has traditionally refrained from discussing religion in its major approaches- Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism, it states that the foundation for the inclusion of religion in IR theory and international relations can be found "elsewhere within the body of knowledge of the social sciences" such as sociology (2004a, p. 33). The book examines at length the role of religious legitimacy as a tool in domestic politics as well as employed by political actors in international relations to conclude that though "religion can even justify what nothing else can", it is a double-edged sword that can be used by non-policy makers as well, thus complicating and muddling the several spheres religion permeates (2004a, pp. 60–61).

The main limitation of the study is thus that while it acknowledges the strengths and limitations of religion's power of persuasion and presents a correlation (qualitatively and quantitatively) between religious/ethnic conflicts and religion-backed intervention by other states in the conflicts, it cannot concretely suggest religion-supported causation for such foreign intervention[2]. In other words, while the study demonstrates that religious conflicts attract foreign

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[2] The study does not clarify the exact difference between religion and non-religion when referring to the data on conflicts, and that has been pointed out as 'problematic' by other scholars discussing categories such as 'supernatural', 'religious', 'natural or non-religious', especially when discussing irrational violence and conflict (Fitzgerald, 2011, pp. 34–35).

intervention with higher probability, it does not prove or explain that the intervention was motivated by religion too. Hence, the study is a useful foundation for exploring the religious dimension in international relations but does not provide an answer to the question- of what theoretical framework, or which methodological approach is likely to accommodate religion in IR theory and international relations appropriately.

The question is partially addressed by Thomas (2005) who has centered his study on the debate of how modernity feels challenged by the 'resurgence' of religion and the pathways it opens to understand global politics in a post-modern framework, which considers religion and spirituality as inherent to it. He answers with a firm negative to the question of whether the Western Enlightenment is the way to reach/achieve universal values by arguing that religion's 'resurgence' can be understood as the struggle in several parts of the world against the Western notion of modernity. For him what is missing in IR is debates over postmodernism and secularism in the study of culture and religion in international relations theory and politics, which rationalist approaches of IR fail to incorporate or address due to their inherent assumptions (Petito & Hatzopoulos, 2003; Thomas, 2005, pp. 245–247). The contribution of this study is that a postmodern inquiry into the notions, culture-specific contexts, and discourses surrounding extremism, terrorism, and fundamentalism-all that is frequently attributed to religion, unveils new perspectives and inherent biases in IR. It can be deduced, then, that the 'resurgence' of religion is not an anomalous observation in international relations, as traditional IR would state. Does that mean, religion can be considered a (historically constructed) uniform category that could encompass all religions alike? This study does not discuss the implications of making that generalization (in fact, at times it implicitly makes it).

In his chapter titled *Religion and International Conflict* in Dark (2000), Thomas (2000) argued that the global resurgence of religion does not greatly affect international institutions, but only international norms, stating that though most challenges to fundamentals of global society are posed by Islam (as transnational religion), these developments "are related to the unstable politics of the region rather than to anything that is specific to Islam" (2000a, pp. 19–20). The implicit conclusion here is in line with what the editor of the book (Dark, 2000a) concludes in his chapter- religion is as much a factor in conflict as a possible way of reconciliation. The unanswered question is then - how can religion be instrumentalized in this peace process? Would all religions have similar (probably observable or calculable) effects in the reconciliation process? These chapters do not provide that answer, and neither is the question addressed in the book that critiques the very 'secular' assumptions of IR theory and international relations. More particularly, it provides a critique of several approaches under constructivism and postmodernism for at times, falling into the trap of making secular assumptions as traditional IR does.

Thomas (2005) concludes this book by stating that "an approach to theory that seeks to understand the action of religious actors through a narrative of their identity and the meaning they give to their actions will not allow us to formulate theories with predictive capacity or produce the kind of general conclusions social scientific scholars seek in international relations" (2005, p. 248). He suggests that the questions should be "what narratives" instead of "what theories" to obtain an explanation for different circumstances leading to different outcomes (2005, p. 249). But does IR not wish to know the wider implications of religion's impacts on the international system? Would it not be ideal to move towards a theory/methodology to explain both- causation between circumstances and outcomes, as well as how (different) religions are

impacting regional/global international relations? Those questions have been left unanswered as well.

Some scholars have examined more unconventional theories of IR to study the (degree of) their appropriateness in the study of religion. Sandal & Fox (2013) have made a valuable contribution in that aspect by providing a comprehensive comparison of religion in IR theory and international relations under the frameworks of five main theories: Classical Realism, Neorealism, Neoliberalism, English School, and Constructivism (2013, p. 6). Religion, instead of being considered as a vague term is tied into concrete roles that it (potentially) serves in international relations: religious legitimacy, religious worldviews, religious states, non-state religious actors, transnational religious movements, transnational issues, and religious identity (Ibid.). They also handle the methodological challenges by incorporating several methodologies, at times, drawing from wider political science discipline for this study. They make the most distinct argument (when compared to other scholars):

> …the issue of religion is not as distant from these theories as many assume. For example, core Classical Realists such as Morgenthau, Machiavelli, and Hobbes directly addressed religion in their writings... All of the theories are found to be able to account for all of the potential religious influences on international relations. However, as one would expect, each theory has its strengths and weaknesses in that each handles some issues better than others. (Sandal & Fox, 2013, pp. 6–7)

For instance, they argue that "scholarly investigations that have human nature as either a causal variable or a background condition can accommodate religion" under the Classical Realist tradition (2013, p. 34), but they risk being closer to Christian Realist studies (discussed in the next section) by assuming a certain "nature of man" that impacts power and interests, in line with

the Christian faith. The same would be the case for other Abrahamic faiths such as an Islamic view of "human nature", which would likely be different from the other "natures" depending on the specific religion in a specific period in history. Moreover, the positivist idea of rationality underpinning neorealism and neoliberalism in IR does not take into account social and historical contexts (Thomas, 2000b). These possible challenges have not been addressed in the book, even though the book states that it is a part of the larger discussion in the discipline and not a final word:

> Many of these theories have relative blind spots. There are aspects of religion where our ability to understand religion through their lenses is at best strained and only partially successful. … [Classical Realism] has difficulty dealing with non-state religious actors. However, these blind spots are similar to the blind spots that these theories are known to have in a more general sense. (Sandal & Fox, 2013, pp. 180–181)

There are some important clarifications provided at the outset of the text, such as the scholars' limited experience with non-Western traditions and thus, their concentrated focus on the Abrahamic faiths in the book and their impacts in nations/contexts where they are more prominent (2013, p. 11). That serves as a major limitation of the study (i.e., generalizations about religion hinted at through analysis only of the Abrahamic faiths). Nevertheless, the research is important in pointing at the possibilities of existing IR in treating religion when defined through the role it plays in international relations. As one of the prominent scholars of religion and IR, Jonathan Fox has concluded in his own book, determining exactly how religion works as a factor in inter-state relations is still a work-in-progress (Fox, 2018).

While the content of religious ideologies may change over time, how they interact with IR

remains more constant. This is true of most of religion's influences on international relations.

Religion is used to legitimize and de-legitimize actions and policies. It influences the beliefs and

actions of policy makers and their constituents. Religious institutions and other non-state

religious actors seek to influence various aspects of IR. These general patterns remain constant,

but their specific manifestations can vary over time and place. More importantly, the religious

influences on IR are related to how religion influences domestic politics. In fact, I would argue

that at their core, the influences are the same but they manifest differently in the domestic and

international arenas. (Fox, 2018, p. 204)

Another important and widely cited scholar Jeffrey Haynes (2013) has argued that while

religion needs to be incorporated into IR, it should not be considered the central factor in

international relations, and hence its significance is largely dependent on the context. The study,

founded on the issue of religion and globalization, has considered certain religious actors and

analyzed their overall stance towards democracy, economic development, human rights, conflict,

and cooperation. The study argues that the traditional theories of Realism and Liberalism are not

sufficient to capture the religious dimension of international relations, and hence has employed

an array of theories as well such as English School, Neo-Marxism, Constructivism, and Critical

Theory. The study concludes that all religions examined through religious actors were impacted

by globalization, and the incurred impacts forced religions to adopt newer concerns and

objectives. But the study does not make a distinction between different objectives adopted by

different religions (or religious actors), in the backdrop of their fundamental differences.

Moreover, while a clear line of argument is established to demonstrate how religious

actors in European and Latin American nations "have had significant and still reverberating

international effects" (2013a, p. 556), their larger security implications have not been gauged or hypothesized. Lastly, while the basic assumption pursued during the book was that states (and thus formal international relations) are largely secular, there is no inference provided about whether the 'international society' continues to be secular, as assumed, or would lose its secularity in light of 'clashing' global entities in international relations. Haynes (2013) himself concludes that it is unclear "to what extent religion as a political actor is concerned with spiritual issues alone, or where – and how and in what ways – other, more material, concerns also impact on what religious actors do politically, both domestically and transnationally (2013a, p. 558).

This paves the way to examine the scholarship that has gained attention (mainly) after the Cold War, due to its emphasis on the deficiency of IR to fully explain the impact of religion in international relations (if at all they consider it a factor). What has emerged is a cluster of religion-based theories of IR that seek to explain global politics and the role of religion in (positively) impacting the same, at times, by the reformulation of basic assumptions in mainstream IR theories.

2.3.2. *Religious IR theories and frameworks of analysis*

Religious theories of IR or religion-based approaches towards re-interpreting IR theory and international relations have tried to build on the flaws of the basic assumptions sustaining the mainstream IR theories such as Realism and Liberalism, while also trying to incorporate religious views into the IR frameworks. For instance, this group of scholars sees more potential in religion in explaining international relations, i.e., highlighting the need to acknowledge three aspects: the finiteness of man's knowledge and action, the limitations of secularism (which they argue can be fundamentalist too), and possible transcendence of states at the heart of IR by

focusing instead on global/transcending identities. For them, the inclusion of religious insight in decoding and understanding international relations, "opens a new dimension and vision in politics which are hidden in the daily routine of secular politics" (Troy, 2012, p. 4). One of the desired objectives of the scholarship is to make the IR (especially Realism in a majority of the works) compatible with the religious explanations of international relations (and sometimes, vice versa, by highlighting flaws in the secular IR).

Among such approaches, Christian Realism contests the basic assumptions of Realism as being an amoral theory, purely based on materially definable and calculable "interests" in an anarchic system of global politics, where states pursue their goals strategically to achieve the desired ends. Christian Realists, in turn, raise the issue of morality that is absent in Realist discussions and define utility, which alone cannot explain the existence of conflicts or lack of peace worldwide[3]. They state a more positive outlook than the pessimistic assumptions and predictions in Realist analysis. Scholars such as Troy (2012) have analyzed the role of Christianity in peacebuilding activities, and assert that (Judeo-Christian) religion has immense potential for peace for being "at its best inclusive and peaceful". They argue that the realist, then, must be a Christian. Scholars such as Niebuhr (1953, p. 29) have explained the existence of conflict in the Western world owing to "a civil war in the heart of western civilization, in which a fanatical equalitarian creed has been pitted against a libertarian one", referring to Russian and American respectively. Collectively, Christian realist scholars assert that Christianity, broadly, can offer a more vivid explanation of human behavior which comprises both- belief in God and rationality derived from their faith. Employed in the analysis of foreign policy in the West,

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[3] In the context of Christian Realism, there has been an attempt to bridge the assumed utilitarian approach of states with a metaphysical desire at human level, which is both ethical and religious. Here metaphysical desire does not arise from a lack within or materially, but one that mediates between the alacrity of the human and the divine, i.e., God (Dalton, 2009; Troy, 2012).

particularly the US, Christian Realism provides a more optimistic IR theory and international relations, based on the view that humans and the justice they seek is respectively reflective of the God that created them, and the morally guided peace in the world (again derived from how God would want the world to be). Thus (from an Augustinian view of Christian traditions), faith is taken as the factor influencing thoughts and actions/decisions of people and communities, in turn emphasizing the inherent power of faith to apprise and improve (the U.S.) foreign policy (Chaplin & Joustra, 2010).

An actively discussed (but not mainstream) non-Western IR view is that of the Hindu theory of IR (in an article written by Sarkar (1919)), which draws not only from the Vedic texts but is largely associated with Kautilya's *mandala theory*[4] (also known as Chanakya or Vishnugupta) (Kauṭalya. & Kangle, 1969). Hindu philosophy of the state presents a clearly defined concept of external sovereignty (which far predates Machiavelli and other political thinkers (Boesche, 2003; Sarkar, 1919). The Hindu IR, in that sense, analyzes sovereignty as a concept that is complete only if present internally and externally, i.e., to be sovereign a state needs to be able to exercise authority (internal) unhindered by and independent of other states (external). Under the *mandala theory* (which views states as exercising spheres of influence, interests, ambitions, etc.), the Hindu idea of "balance of power" is articulated by Kautilya, as he explains the underpinnings of his military strategy, warfare, and foreign policy. However, it must be noted that Kautilya's work is a collection of the vast Indian knowledge traditions, including

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[4] The oldest Kautilya's Arthashastra in existence was found in 1905 as a last of its kind palm-leaf document and is the world's oldest treatise on political philosophy. Arthashastra, a treatise in Sanskrit was composed around 300BC by Kautilya, the prime minister of the Mauryan Empire, and comprehensively explains ancient India's governance, military strategy, economics, politics, justice and law, as well as the duties of rulers, ministers and others in a society (Kauṭalya. & Kangle, 1969).

undated tests such as Vedas, epics such as Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Hindu political thought by Manu, Kamandaka to name a few.

Arthashastra presents a framework to study state and statecraft simultaneously wherein the end is to achieve systemic stability in the given system design. Power, order, and state all take the concept of *Dharma* (as duty) as their overarching reference point (Bisht, 2019, p. 169). For instance, in Arthashastra, justice signifies fulfilling one's rightful duty as postulated in the *Dharma* texts. In Kautilya's theory, material well-being defined in utilitarian terms had to be reconceptualized in terms of spiritual and humanitarian interest. Methodologically, employing over two dozen research methods (as defined in modern jargon), would imply that "Kautilyan non-Western eclectic theory of IR seemed to systematically blend the familiar research methods of 'rationalism' and 'reflectivism'" (Shahi, 2019, p. 142).

Among some (macro) studies that hold religion central enough to displace other ways of imagining and explaining the complex IR theory and international relations, Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' is widely discussed, though it must be emphasized that his work does not refer to religion or ethnicity, but is assumed so implicitly, due to centrality of civilizations in his work[5]. Though Western-centric in arguments, the thesis attempts to explain what Huntington considers the conflictive nature of post-Cold War world politics due to diverging civilizational values in Muslim nations and the West (Huntington, 1996, p. 217).

Considering the civilizational fault lines as the plausible conflict hot spots in international relations, Huntington (1996) highlights eight key world civilizations: Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox, Africa in the East, and Western and Latin American in the West. He argued

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[5] Some scholars such as (Fox & Sandler, 2004a) have argued that if religion is assumed to be what Huntington refers to as civilization, that would imply that religion only gained centrality in the post-Cold War conflicts, which is not true either. Instead, these works argue that religion has always been important but 'overlooked' factor in IR/ir.

that the main distinctions among peoples are not "ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural" (Huntington, 1996, p. 21). While he keeps nation-states as powerful actors, he maintains that "conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations." (Ibid.). At the same time, Huntington considers the inevitable clash between the West and other civilizations, as the gravest "threat to world peace, and an international order" (Huntington, 1996, p. 321). Some key arguments in this work are: the incompatibility between Western values of democracy and individualistic human rights that would not be willingly adopted by other civilizations; the post-Cold War period of sustained, values-based, conflicts in core civilizational states such as China (Sinic); cooperation between the Muslim world and China against the West, driven by "enemy of my enemy is my friend" logic, etc. (Huntington, 1996, p. 94).

There are divergent views about Huntington's arguments, including Iran's former President Seyed Mohammad Khatami, who rejected the 'clash of civilizations' in favor of the 'dialogue of civilizations' highlighting peace, dialogue, and compromise being the desired outcomes (Khatami, 2012). In terms of methodological criticism, one group of scholars has argued that Huntington's 'West versus the rest' framework provides unintended evidence of the low consideration given to religion in IR within theories such as those of modernization or secularization. In that sense, 'West versus the rest' describes the "twentieth-century divisions within the social sciences over whether religion is important. This is because the argument that religion is not important is a particularly Western argument" (Fox & Sandler, 2004a, p. 16). For another group of scholars, while the U.S. foreign policy (and increasing Western intervention) has been identified as a civilizational 'clash' with the Muslim world since 9/11 in IR theory and international relations, there are several flaws in Huntington's thesis about civilizations.

For instance, in his book *From Huntington to Trump*, Haynes (2019) questioned the interchangeable use of 'paradigm' and 'framework' by Huntington, which seem to be impressionistically constructed "employing both empirical and anecdotal information and ideas which might not necessarily stand up to the scrutiny of inquiry meeting social scientific criteria. But it had its own value" (Haynes, 2019, p. 13). He also argued that, unlike Huntington's thesis, civilizations are not autonomous entities, do not have well-defined borders, and do not have mutually exclusive sets of unique values (p. 18). However, Huntington's work has encouraged (critical) interest in religion in IR theory and international relations.

Later research that agrees with Huntington's emphasis on civilizations is *Religion and Politics in the International System Today* by E. Hanson, though states that the former's work does not clearly establish the impact religion and politics have on each other (Hanson, 2006, p. 59). Hanson also offers a post-Cold War model functioning on "the interaction between the contemporary globalization of the political economy, military, and communication (political plus EMC) systems and the significant role of religion in influencing global politics (Hanson, 2006, p. 1). He emphasizes that the elimination of the nature and power of religion can cause serious errors in foreign policy/global politics. An implication of this study could be that religion is not only part of the conflict but also the resolution, though the focus of Hanson's work is more on establishing how religion and politics interact to counter the increasing power of EMC. His conclusion also implies an inherent Christian (Western) view such as when he concluded that meditative and experiential Indic religions seem to be "converging structurally with the religions of the book" through "concrete systems of social ethics and ecclesiastical organization" (Hanson, 2006, p. 304).

Either the underlying position is of the dominance of Judeo-Christian faiths in global politics and even in non-Judeo-Christian spheres (although Latin American states too have conversely influenced Christianity), or an Oriental view of Indic religions[6] (such as by evoking Church-state relationship between Indian political parties and state) and religions of public life like Confucianism (wherein he claims people are getting distanced from its spiritualness).

Kubálková's International Political Theology (IPT) offers a more rule-based constructivist framework to place religion at the same level as other IR scholarship. Stating the resurgence of religion in international relations, she examines how IR can explain this phenomenon and its impacts on global politics. She proposed IPT as a way to move beyond the largely material emphasis of IR by bringing in religion, the same way as IPE (International Political Economy) was a response to the overlooked economic factors in IR (Kubálková, 2003, p. 79). She asserts that since the constructivist framework allows a flexible definition of what is rationality (and also the examination of the role of blind acceptance against rational self-conscious thought), fulfillment can be achieved in several forms. Thus, it creates space wherein IPT (that departs from strict positivism and materialism) can be studied while incorporating several religions. Kubálková also provides a detailed explanation of the roots of postmodern thought in religious affiliations, besides a discussion on the ontological foundations and the differences between the religious and the secular (Kubálková, 2003, p. 87).

However, the claim that most religions "agree that it is impossible to describe the transcendent reality of God in normal conceptual language thought" (2003, p. 88), where she

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[6] For instance, Hanson states that "In his Essentials of Hinduism (1922) Hedgewar *[sic]* based Indian nationhood on the cultural heritage of Aryan Hinduism" (Hanson, 2006, p. 109). There are two errors in this statement on (mis)understood but vastly quoted work *Essentials of Hindutva*: one, it was authored by V.D. Savarkar and two, while Savarkar (1922) does mention the amalgamation of Aryan and non-Aryan (people/races) within the larger geographical mass *Bharata*, he does not differentiate between Aryan Hinduism and non-Aryan Hinduism.

assumes a common rule in all religions that distinguishes between the human and the God, is a huge generalization. Similarly, Fitzgerald (2011, p. 23) has critiqued Kubálková's 'wild generalizations' about what "all religions, western and eastern" share, and also the "Christian theological positions in their approach to 'religion'" (Fitzgerald, 2011, p. 157), all of which affect the IPT framework. Additionally, since constructivist approaches have a limitation in considering societal interests and power, IPT also conceptualizes religion as a rule-based system, thus suffering restraint when considering the metaphysical, and consequently, the dimension of religion in politics (Troy, 2012, pp. 84–85).

2.3.3. *The Secular in the post-secularizing IR theory and global politics*

Habermas has highlighted three phenomena whose convergence signals the global 'resurgence of religion', namely, increased missionary activities (related to the propagation of religion and its political implications), 'fundamentalist' or hardline radicalization (and the eventual impacts on spheres such as politics, security, economy, society, etc.), and the use of distinctive religion-based and religion-backed violence as a political tool (Habermas, 2006, 2008). He then points out the quintessential characteristics of a neutral state versus a secular state with regard to religion, by arguing that

> Certainly, the domain of a state, which controls the means of legitimate coercion, should not be opened to the strife between various religious communities, otherwise, the government could become the executive arm of a religious majority that imposes its will on the opposition…Yet the state's neutrality does not preclude the permissibility of religious utterances within the political public sphere, as long as the institutionalized decision-making process at the parliamentary, court, governmental and administrative levels remains clearly separated from the informal flows of

political communication and opinion formation among the broader public of citizens. The "separation of church and state" calls for a filter between these two spheres—a filter through which only "translated," i.e., secular, contributions may pass from the confused din of voices in the public sphere into the formal agendas of state institutions. (Habermas, 2008, p. 28).

For IR, the visible conflicts in international relations that flare up in connection with religious issues give us reason to doubt whether the relevance of religion has waned. On the other hand, 'secular' itself remains obscure as a term and as a practice when seen together with religious freedom. One reason is that in practice, the strict separation of 'church/mosque' and the state is "neither constitutionally declared in many secular states nor a practical issue", whereas religious freedom which is often declared and ensured constitutionally, "is neither necessary nor sufficient" condition for a state to be secular (Kuru, 2007, p. 569 footnote 2).

Kuru (2007) contrasted secularism in practice in France, Turkey, and the US and argued that the reason why American policies are accepting of public display of religion whereas France and Turkey are not is due to their different ideological struggles, which affect their respective state policies toward religion. He classifies this struggle in secular states as passive secularism and assertive secularism. Passive secularism allows a state to be inclusive of public visibility of religion because of the "passive" role of the state in pushing religion into the private sphere. On the other hand, assertive secularism incites states to play a more active role in 'social engineering' wherein it must be ensured that religion has no place in public spaces. Kuru (2007) implies the pragmatic nature of the former, while a more "comprehensive doctrine" is pursued by the latter.

Among the scholars that have challenged the (assumed) fixed secularist divide between religion and (state) politics in IR, Elizabeth S. Hurd (2008) has argued that these divides are

socially and historically constructed. She has elaborated on two key "philosophical and historical" legacies of secularism, i.e., Laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism in Europe and America to first argue how they have impacted international relations, though case studies of the US-Iran, and the European Union-Turkey conflictual relations. In doing so, she has highlighted the deficiencies in mainstream IR to incorporate religion by assuming a secular nature of international relations under theoretical assumptions in realism, liberalism, and constructivism (Hurd, 2012b, pp. 38–39). While she also emphasizes the role of religion in international relations through domestic politics like other scholars discussed above, the main implication of this study is pointing at (and in turn questioning) the political authority of Laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism in international relations. In doing so the question she has successfully answered through her case studies is why IR scholars have "struggled to respond to the power of religion" in international relations, particularly in the context of political Islam and the West (Hurd, 2008, pp. 117–120). She has also urged IR scholars to "revisit the secularist epistemological and ontological foundations of the discipline" (2008, p. 154).

> Secularisms are not fixed and final achievements of European inspired modernity but patterns of political rule with their own contested histories and global political implications. Failure to acknowledge this has led to a selective blindness in the study of world politics, as the blanket usage of these categories masks the politics surrounding claims to secularism, secularization, secular democracy, secular human rights, and related constructs. (Hurd, 2012b, p. 47)

One more key theoretical/methodological question remains unanswered, or rather, undiscussed- what theoretical approach in IR (if at all), then, gets closer to overcoming the shortcomings of the "secularist epistemological and ontological foundations of the discipline"?

Or is it to be assumed, much like the works discussed in the previous section on 'religious approaches to IR' that IR is not appropriate to incorporate religious dimension in IR theory and international relations? Besides, in terms of empirical study, the case studies of India and Japan in Hurd (2008) only find mentions while the careful examination of the West versus political Islam provides detailed evidence of Hurd's arguments, in turn, not allowing her to place her work among studies on secularism in Asia. Lastly, the study provides an academic attempt at "critical deconstruction", but does not adequately address persistent obscurities such as "reinscribing problematic categories that she had set out to critically examine, such as historicized terms 'religion', 'secular', 'politics' etc." (Fitzgerald, 2011, pp. 25–26).

Roy (2010) argues that the close link between secularism and the resurgence of religion is not the latter retaliating against the former, but the latter being a product of the former (2010, p. 2). The process of secularization thus becomes not victorious over religion in IR but should be held accountable for distorting and uprooting religion from its philosophical and traditional bases. It is concerning for him, the emergence of 'people' in modern societies who have a tendency to stick with different charismatic forms of faith, even when such faiths are different from their shared cultural religions. Globalization has thus given rise to fundamentalism as a distinct religious form, by first imposing 'deculturization', and then presenting it as evidence of its 'universality'(2010, p. 5) [7]. Fitzgerald (2011) critiques IR for 'blind spots' in arguments concerning (discursive) distinction of the religion-secular binary. He argues for the need to creatively connect the changes in the meaning of 'religion' which saw the parallel invention of

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[7] Roy (2010) has stressed on the role of mass conversions in religions as well as reconversions in modern times to explain the new group of people with distorted faith that is not rooted in one's cultural contexts- a product of fundamentalist globalization.

the 'non-religious domain of natural reason' within the ideologies and theories of politics, state, and society.

Additionally, the meaning of 'religion' itself has been undergoing transformation implying that scholarship would likely be "constrained by and within the categories and discourses that configure dominant myths" (Fitzgerald, 2011, pp. 243–244). While he does discuss theoretical avenues more conducive to studying religion, as explained above, he concludes that "I cannot offer any positive strategy in the form of an alternative paradigm" (Ibid.).

Religion had been considered a threat to the advancements of liberal secularism, but Thomas (2000b, p. 820) has argued that by considering religions as backward and barbaric, we risk misinterpreting them across geographies and cultures mainly because "the meaning of religion in early modern Europe, and how we understand religion in international relations today" is different. It has also been recognized that to truly accommodate religion's return and cultural pluralism, a social understanding needs to be generated that not only acknowledges religion's legitimacy within communities but also its role in the development and cultivation of these communities and states- together termed post-Westphalian (or post-secular) international order (Thomas, 2000b). As Barbato (2013) has stated:

> If we do God in International Relations, we need to know how to do God, and how we do God should not only sit well with a fraction of people from a specific faith but cater for all kinds of believers as well as for agnostics and the religious unmusical among International Relations scholars. (2013, p. 16)

Fitzgerald (2011) has offered a deep critical examination from the viewpoint of religious studies, of several important works on religion in IR theory and international relations. His argument also reverberates the fear expressed by (and a challenge identified by) many IR scholars that are working on post-secularizing the discipline- religion's return in IR will reignite or worsen the conventional religious-secular divide, which itself is a power discourse to enforce its own worldviews on either side. For instance, (secular) Christianity was imposed on the world by the West to move it away from several diverse religions, which was preceded by the invention of Christendom to purify Europe of pagan beliefs. For Fitzgerald, it implies that there is no common 'religion' that can incorporate all religions while also providing a leveled field for all religions to be juxtaposed against secularism.

For Barbato (2013), the research should be conducted keeping in mind the vast diversities of all cultures and religions, underpinned at times, by the Foucauldian power-knowledge dimension. This aspect is pursued in her study on pilgrimages and religious semantics in the post-secular IR theory and international relations, i.e., to "introduce the religious concept of pilgrimage into the international political theory that I would like to see developing in a postsecular direction" (Barbato, 2013, p. 18). This study states one of the most crucial starting points in the post-secular study:

> There is no clearcut definition of religion that covers them all and distinguishes them from nonreligious cultural activities. Each time the language game of religion is played, its borders are contested. The language game of religion is indeed very often a political power game. (Barbato, 2013, p. 20)

These studies, thus open the way for discussing the possibilities of analyzing secularism as an umbrella term or rather as a spectrum of religion-state separations where each point on the spectrum changes the degree to which religion permeates the personal, social, and political sphere of life within a state. One implication of this is that religion never really truly left politics and temporal affairs and has continued to impact the state's functioning and decision-making even in modern states. The other implication is the existence of several secularisms, not only due to different state characteristics but also because secularism could in fact have a religious definition even in a modern state. This latter aspect of multiple secularisms is explored in depth in Chapter 5, which seeks to understand the interplay between religion, politics, and secularism in the post-colonial modern states of South Asia.

2.4. Creating space for alternatives in the religious resurgence in the 'post-secular' IR and international relations

The resurgence of religion in international relations theory as well as political debates has begun to be addressed in the literature that has actively challenged the established theoretical frameworks that define, categorize, and predict international relations among states (Fox & Sandler, 2004; Shah, Stepan & Toft, 2021). There are several debates the study of IR literature provides regarding (in)ability of the Westphalian constructs (i.e., the sovereignty of state in deciding and tolerating religions domestically), an agreeable and comprehensive definition of religion, that encompasses all commonly held ideas, community beliefs as well as long-standing traditions, and the obscurity of using a context-specific term 'secular' as widely understood and

universal. The critical analysis of the literature reveals several gaps in existing scholarship on

religion in the international relations discipline (Table 1).

Table 1: Summarizing critical analysis of literature on religion in IR

Categories proposed	Key works reviewed	Main Limitations Unaddressed gaps in research
Incorporating Religion in IR theory	Dark (2000) Scott (2000) Petito and Hatzopoulos (2003) Fox & Sandler (2004) Scott (2005) Sandal & Fox (2013) Haynes (2013) Fox (2018)	• Largely constructivism, neoliberalism, realism, and English school studies • Focus on Judeo-Christian religions in the analysis • Limited to roles of religion in domestic politics, that religion itself as something that is constantly evolving. • Limited consensus on which theory is most appropriate for analysis
Religious IR theories and frameworks of analysis	Huntington (1996) Vendulka (2003) Hanson (2006) Chaplin & Joustra (2010) Troy (2012) Bisht (2019) Shahi (2019)	• Assumption that all religious frameworks are similar. • Despite new perspectives in practice, end up reinforcing existing western readings of religion. • Does not address how to incorporate different religions into one analysis, without overemphasizing the western frameworks. • These studies are not considered mainstream, and run parallel to mainstream IR
The secular in the Post-secularizing IR theory and international relations	Habermas (2006) Kuru (2007) Habermas (2008) Hurd (2008) Roy (2010) Fitzgerald (2011) Hurd (2012) Barbato (2013)	• Does not address if other secularism(s) can exist beyond Laicism and Judeo-Christian secularism, and if yes, which ones? • Critically examines other literature, but does not provide any alternative theory to study religion within IR. • Does not answer how different secularism(s) and religion(s) could be studied under the same theoretical framework. • Assumes a move from secular to post-secular international relations, but does not establish implications on IR

Source: Prepared by the author.

Transformation of religion (including the invention of religion) from a community

concept to that which exists in a personal sphere has been argued as an imperative to the

development of the Westphalian idea of state and the subsequent foundation of liberalism as known today, however, mere mapping of this transition does not explain the ways in which religion informs IR theory and international relations in the third world, or non-Western societies (Petito & Hatzopoulos, 2003). Secondly, mainstream Western secularism that has found its way in foreign policy in the West, has not been embraced with the same vigor in the South, where religion is a factor in domestic politics, global diplomacy, and the rule of law.

Thirdly, the dominance of the Eurocentric IR provides an exclusive intellectual framework, from which non-Western IR is largely left out of the debate, creating a gap that needs to be filled, not by imposition of secularism as the norm of in global politics, but by acknowledgment of diversity and existence of alternative or non-Western religious-political thought. This also points to a fourth discrepancy in literature, where to address this gap in religion in IR theory and international relations, there is an emergence of new literature that focuses exclusively on secularism and other religious IR theory and international relations, but those ideas have not been agreeably subsumed into the existing frameworks and theories, ending up running parallel to the mainstream IR.

IR scholarship has been proposing several new ideas to overcome these gaps in the literature. One is the study of religion as 'soft power' that enables the examination of abstract religion in an equally abstract but comprehensible dimension of 'non-coercive' power exercised both by states as well as non-state actors in global politics (Haynes, 2021). A more comprehensive study would provide a comparative analysis of secular soft power as well as religious soft power, as alternative (not necessarily opposing) forces in IR and international relations. While it could be argued that constructivism, could provide the necessary bedrock to talk about the social construction of not just IR and international relations, but also religiosity, it

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does not provide the required framework to talk about how religion could impact domestic politics, which in turn could impact international politics. Moreover, religion, in itself, is a very broad term to deal with and needs to be redefined through a concept that can retain the essence of religion, while making the study of an abstract concept such as religion appropriate for being examined in the realm of politics and international relations.

In light of the above literature review and the present gaps in the existing scholarship on religion (summarized in Table 1), this dissertation raises the following research questions:

1. Theoretical: How can religion be factored into IR theory and international relations?

2. Empirical: How religion has impacted and shaped South Asian international relations?

    2.1. How has religion impacted the mutual perceptions in South Asia among the triad of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh?

    2.2. What conflicts/convergences in post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, are caused by religion?

    2.3. How has religion manifested in foreign policies? How that, in turn, has impacted regional/inter-state security architecture in South Asia?

The next chapter addresses the first question and discusses the theoretical framework and methodology in detail.

Chapter 3

How to do religion: operationalizing Religion in IR theory and international relations

3.1. Paving the way for religion in IR

The previous chapter discussed how religion is placed within the larger discipline of IR and critically analyzed these theoretical developments. This chapter aims to provide a discussion on examining religion in IR theory as well as methodological avenue for studying different religions under the same framework. The preceding discussion established that when the evolution of religion is studied as an expression of power and influence, there might be more variables to be considered besides the traditional religion-secular binary, such as non-secular but non-religious. There might be a researcher's judgment at work in placing these factors as independent variables or otherwise because as argued above, religion is part of the larger process in society and gets affected by international relations while striving to impact it. Hence, the discernable relation between religion/secular and international relations becomes a two-way cause-effect relationship, or as Haynes (2013, p. 45) has argued, dialectical and interactive: where each shapes and influences the other.

What is missing so far in the literature is a link that connects religion and secularism in a process within IR that enables the operationalization of religion at all levels of politics which could impact international politics. This chapter argues that exegesis provides the link between studying religion as a factor affecting international relations in theory as well as practice and in

turn, being affected by global politics. The next sections discuss the theoretical and methodological frameworks for the dissertation.

3.2. Alternative Theoretical Framework for Religion in IR

This section addresses the first research question of this dissertation:

How can religion be factored into IR theory and international relations?

Religion has been problematized by scholars in domestic as well as transnational spheres as a force that confers legitimacy, impacts the perspectives of political actors, moves beyond borders, and affects issues such as human rights, terrorism, etc. (Fox, 2006). But the discussion has largely concentrated itself on the impact of certain religions and certain powers in the West. In a similar vein, secularism has been traced to its Westphalian roots and employed in a comparison with religion that it seeks to eliminate from politics, without acknowledging the existence of several shades of secularism that exist in society or its probable impacts on political perspectives and policies. Moreover, the two-way cause-effect relationship between religion(s) and secularism(s) cannot be established unless there is a two-way link that allows a simultaneous examination of religious impacts on IR and global politics' impact on religion(s)/secularism(s).

This section will provide a way to factor religion (as well as secularism), with the underlying assumption, that so long as religion gets to define the secular, they can neither exist in a binary nor be overlooked by considering one over the other. In that context, the term that needs to be examined is exegesis, which will be defined and conceptualized in the following section.

3.2.1. *Operationalizing religion: Exegesis in IR*

Religion has been defined by several studies in many different ways to accommodate both- the meta-narrative of God (supernatural), life, and material manifestations that govern the self-referential religious universe of each religion (it must be noted that since most studies mainly focused on Judeo-Christian religions, the definitions do not necessarily accommodate other religions). Other scholars investigating religion in international relations and politics have ruled out the possibility of perfectly defining the term religion, in a way that captures the essence of all religions for two main reasons. One, defining religion is an unresolved scholarly debate among theologians; and, two, defining particular religions is considered exclusive autonomy of certain religious entities (Haynes, 2021; Hurd, 2008). Then there is the issue of distinguishing between the generally understood category of religions that deal with the material and supernatural, from the secular worldviews of nationalism, communism, socialism, etc., an issue that Fitzgerald (2011) has highlighted as a trap for those attempting to define the above together with faiths as 'religion'. Thus, this study uses a working definition of religion to overcome the issue of including the meta-narrative of the supernatural, as well as to avoid confusing religion with secular worldviews. This study considers/defines religion as:

a set of veneration practices and belief systems transcending temporal domains but which significantly guide aspects of human life, society and institutional structures when adopted as a hegemonic discourse on identity.

This study will consider that religions provide a cause-effect relationship between past human experiences and their larger connection to existence which can manifest in physical and metaphysical terms. However, how they do it largely depends on their varying assumptions about the nature of existence and the laws that define the relationship between humans and the

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larger existence. This dissertation argues that to study these diverse religious formulations and frameworks of seeing the world, under one common concept would be to see religions not as approaches to "God, the supernatural or spiritual" but as readings of history and frameworks of understanding and characterizing the material world. These can be done by studying how the religions read the world and politics, and by analyzing the impacts of a certain reading of history, on domestic and foreign policy. But since history itself can be contested, as are religious readings of it, the concept of exegesis, which means interpreting the (religious) text to reveal its true meaning, can be employed to overcome this obstacle.

In theology, exegesis includes "ascertaining" the meaning as well as the message of a religious document or a sacred scripture, such that "determining the theology of a given text is an essential part of the exegetical process" (Schultz, 1999, p. 182). In other words, exegesis is a process that the exegete engages in during the study of (Biblical) religious texts to

lay bare the theological thrust of a text, seeking to identify words, phrases, motifs, images, and even structural elements that reveal aspects of God's will and work in the world as it places demands on or otherwise affects Israel, the nations, and/or all humankind… Moreover, an exegesis that is consciously theological will also result in greater clarity regarding the contemporary implications and application of a given text (Schultz, 1999, p. 195).

However, this study aims to look at religion not as approaches to the otherworldly or supernatural, but as readings of history and world-viewing, in order to understand the interaction between religion and temporal affairs including politics. For this dissertation, hence, exegesis needs to be redefined to capture this exercise or process of looking at religions as texts that hold

meaning and historical contexts. This dissertation defines exegesis as an "*interpretation of religion as a historical discourse*" instead of a spiritual or supernatural/metaphysical discourse, as previously stated.

This chapter hypothesizes the following in succeeding sections:

1. The debate over the 'return' of religion and its place in IR could be better understood by examining the debate over the place of history in IR.

2. By acknowledging the differences in how IR understands history, the groundwork for examining religion in IR can be laid through exegesis where the past lends to historicism, what religion lends to exegesis: a worldview and the historian/exegete's position in it, that gets revealed through the examination of what constitutes their history/exegesis in the backdrop of their theoretical commitments/religion.

3. Neo-classical realism, that does not struggle with history as neorealism does, offers the appropriate ground for operationalizing religion through exegesis in IR

The key argument in this section is that religion itself is empowered by exegesis[8], i.e., exegesis provides religion, the much-needed consecration to allow certain religious governance of private as well as public/political spheres in varying degrees. While religion in politics is not referred to for its absolute (historical or predictive) accuracy, exegeses do lend to religion immense possibilities for explaining puzzles that transcend materiality. Religion encompasses narratives of a glorious past—something we can observe and sense in its traces[9], and that needs

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[8] The dissertation argues that exegesis operationalizes religion in IR and international relations. The roles that religion plays in politics could then be understood as the outcomes of exegeses, i.e., exegesis prepares the levelling ground for religion to play those different roles as a political legitimizer, trans-boundary political influencer, rule-setter in issues related to society, culture and faith etc.

[9] While some of the traces of history could be material such as physical monuments or non-material such as generationally transferred memories, but both of these are constructed in time, thus, making the history inaccessible.

continuity for achieving the ends, which, too, are decreed by religion. In that sense, religion and its relation to exegesis can be quite analogous to history and historiography—where the "status of historical knowledge is not based for its truth/accuracy on its correspondence with the past per se but on the various historicisations[10] of it, so that historiography always 'stands in for' the past, the only medium it has to affect a 'historical' presence" (Jenkins, 1995, p. 18).

Considering that religion itself is intangible and inaccessible, exegesis sets the narrative for both—the 'religious' (self) and the other, thus defining its universe such that the 'non-religious' is not mutually exclusive of the defined universe but contained in it. The implication is that the exegesis becomes a (historical) discourse that is invented and imagined, as much as it may (assumably) be true. The exegesis can have logical, supernatural, and metaphysical explanations for material/non-material, but the key point is to assess the logic of exegesis through the contextual boundary it sets around the discursive universe which is essential to link the intelligible with the unperceivable. This context-setting exercise, while carried out uncritically and only interpretively, is what lends exegesis its characteristic of being an invented or imagined historical discourse.

For IR, while religion can be too vast and complex to theorize in the discipline, exegesis defined as the interpretation of religion as a historical discourse is discernable as a tool that paves the way for simultaneously studying religion as well as history within the IR frameworks. Exegesis overcomes the conundrum of the existence of several religious denominations under an

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[10] Jenkins (1995) has critiqued EH Carr and Geoffrey Elton for their dismissal of deconstructionism and analyzed Richard Rorty and Hayden White's characterization of 'real' and 'meta-history'. He has differentiated past from history and argued that while past did exist, but its relation to history through historiography is primarily (and probably only) rhetorical and theoretical. He evokes Derrida's 'there is nothing outside of the text' remark to dismiss the presence of 'real past' in historicization.

umbrella religion, by providing the main characteristics and social implications of different readings of religion, the same way historiography offers varying readings of history because both—religion and history (where the religion claims to find its base) are inaccessible. Exegesis also overcomes the inability of religions with different basic frameworks to be analyzed in the same theoretical frame, by drawing more focus on how clashing historical interpretations impact international relations, rather than dealing with the supernatural and the metaphysical that find no accommodation in IR. Additionally, while exegetical analysis of religion does not offer a conclusion to complex religious scriptures, exegesis can nevertheless be indicative and metaphorical in its interpretations of religion because an exegetical exercise is based on hermeneutically defined methods of analysis. Thus, exegesis can be subjected to subsequent critical analysis to reveal multiple layers of meanings and hidden agendas as it operationalizes religion in IR and international politics.

3.2.2.   Dealing with history in IR

Any definition of the term religion carries with it the huge burden of being able to incorporate several different frameworks. To simplistically assume in IR theory or international relations, that all religions are the same is analogous to what Vaughan-Williams (2005) refers to as assuming a 'singular understanding of historicity' and points out that "an imposition of this kind has particularly important implications for IR since any attempt to stifle the 'equivocity of history' constitutes a violent dehistoricisation, which, in turn, may have significant political ramifications" (2005, p. 118). While exegesis helps move the discussion in IR beyond the multidimensional religion to its interpretation as a historical discourse, it then becomes quintessential to examine how IR treats history.

It must be noted that whether religion has 'returned from exile' or it was an 'overlooked dimension' that was present all along, is closely related to whether religion is treated as something that exists (unobtrusively) in a static in the IR theory or international relations, or as something which has changed and transformed through time and space – differently discernable for the one looking at it. This has been the problem of history as well in IR where the views on what history means for IR have witnessed inter-disciplinary as well as intra-disciplinary debates. The question is whether the multiplicity of history (or exegesis, in this dissertation) is a problem that needs a (theoretical) solution, or "must be considered as a necessary condition for any attempt to deal with context and time" (*Ibid.*).

Mainstream IR theories such as neorealism and neoliberalism that focused on offering general theories of international relations and foreign policy, operated on the assumption that the states' interests and behaviors are pre-encoded and remain the same over time and space (Lawson, 2012; MacKay & LaRoche, 2017). Within the intra-disciplinary debates about the treatment of history in IR, a prominent one is between the (critical) British IR informed by history against the (positivist) ahistorical US mainstream IR. According to Roberts (2006, p. 705), the revived interest in the English School marks the 'turn to history and narrative within IR' on one side of the Atlantic, while the other side is characterized by IR as a 'political science discipline' wherein realism is being challenged by constructivism.

The view is contested by Hobson & Lawson (2008) who argue that the US IR has not been as ahistorical as assumed, since it also places history at the core of its international imagination. In fact, they state that traditional and critical historiographers "turn out to occupy spaces that are surprisingly close together" (2008, p. 416). This implies that while constructivism is steeped in historical and sociological turn in IR, other theories/approaches are not entirely

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outside the same sphere. They argue that neorealism is not ahistorical by invoking Gilpin (1981) who explored the changes in the international system due to the unequal rise of power among states, implying an ever-changing equilibrium through history[11]. For them, the definition and characterization of history are contingent on the researcher's own position on their 'four modes of history' continuum that stretches from mega-macro (highest generality) marked by Constructionism to micro (lowest level of generality) marked by Deconstructionism (Figure 1).
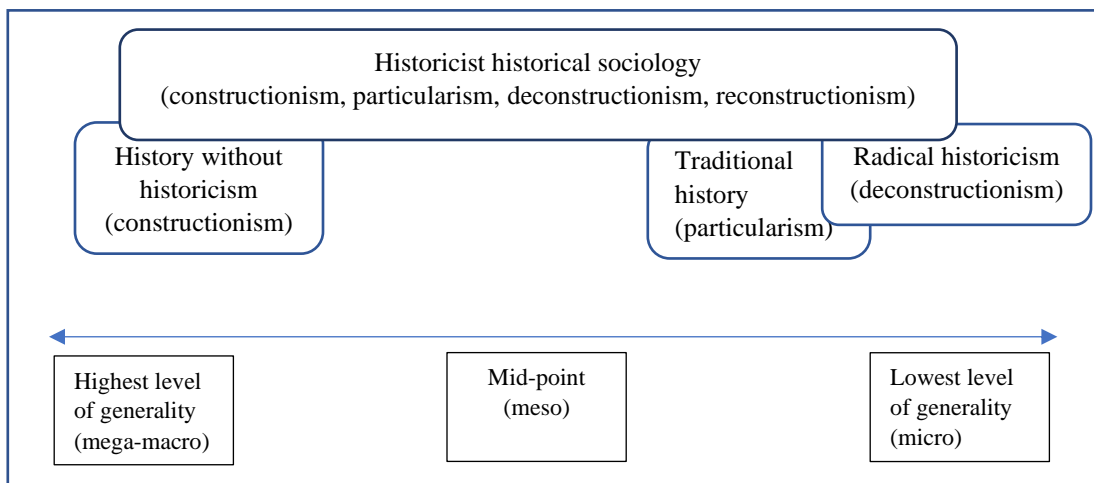
Figure 1 Hobson & Lawson's Modes of History in IR (2008, p. 420)

Source: Prepared by the author.

Where then would exegesis be placed on this mapping of the "we all in IR have been historians" continuum? Given that religions have a self-referential universe of their own[12],

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[11] Gilpin (1981) is referred to in the study: "Robert Gilpin has argued that changes in the international system – caused by states' responses to the escalations of military costs experienced during the European Military Revolution (1550–1660) – induced the transformation of feudal Christendom into the modern sovereign state system. (Hobson & Lawson, 2008, p. 418)

[12] This does not imply that the logic of religions/exegesis is non-falsifiable. The only implicit assumption is that exegesis is a sort of logocentric exercise – one that believes in the existence of an ultimate reality or grounded truth that can act as a point of reference.

exegesis should be mega-macro, with elements of particularism, i.e., in the "Historicist Historical Sociology" mode. But without acknowledging that if we have all been historians in IR but probably without a consensus on what is history, does that not make history also self-referential? The question remains overlooked and unaddressed in the claim that in IR "history has always served as a tool for testing the validity of theoretical positions, and both mainstream and non-mainstream scholarship is perfectly content to use history as a barometer or litmus test for adjudicating between rival schemas" (Hobson & Lawson, 2008, p. 420).

The assumption that there is an objectively knowable past "sidesteps the 'problem of history' by resting on an 'unexamined metaphysical faith in its [history's] capacity to speak a sovereign voice of suprahistorical truth" (Ashley, 1989, p. 263; Vaughan-Williams, 2005, p. 117). The critical historians express concerns over this sidestepping that could enable continuity in IR's hegemonic (ahistorical or anti-historical) research culture that does not prove allegiance to the 'historicity of history' (Vaughan-Williams, 2005, p. 133). On the other hand, critical historians, while presenting important understandings about language and representation in IR theory or international relations, have been termed to deal with peripheral issues in contrast to central issues of national security, power (military and economic) and strategy (Finney, 2001). Other scholars such as Buzan & Little (2001) argue that IR as an intellectual project needs to move beyond deploying key scholars such as Hobbes, Kant, etc., against each other. For them, IR thinking needs to shift

> in order to recognise these stories not as alternative, mutually exclusive, interpretations, but as an interlinked set of perspectives, each illuminating a different facet of reality. The interesting question is not which of these stories is right, but what kind of configuration the combination of them all produces (Buzan & Little, 2001, p. 38).

There are also other positions somewhere between the two extremes of the inter-disciplinary debate about history in IR. Finney (2001) contests the generalization that international history (within IR) is a static discipline in its complexity and sophistication, but critical thinking has seen resistance among traditional historians in the field. He argues for the supplementation of traditional approaches "by innovative ones that can, by illuminating blind spots and supplying a critical political edge, enrich our practice" (Finney, 2001, p. 307). While the debates on history are not binary either, and rather present through several -isms within and beyond the discipline of IR, Lake (2011) argues that these academic sects "engage in selfaffirming research and then wage theological debates between academic religions" theoretically and epistemologically, resulting in 'less understanding rather than more' (Lake, 2011, p. 465). He also advocates for mid-level theories alongside the acknowledgment of several (complementary) paths to understanding.

The above discussion has several implications for further explanation of exegesis in IR. While religion (as seen through material or non-material manifestation in scripture or text) can be a matter of faith intended to be heard as it is, exegesis (historical discourse of religion) bares the exegete's soul[13], i.e., unfolds what the scripture/text means to the one conducting the exegetical exercise. This echoes the conundrum before historians in IR who deal with historical texts, that both 'silence as well as reveal, encode as well as decode' while historians have to take positions as they "presume models of things such as human behavior, agency, and nature 'and they offer them implicitly if not explicitly as the lessons of history for today's understanding of

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[13] Williams (1973) examines the concept of exegesis in (Christian) theology and argues that "I recognize that the task of exegesis involves, more than most of us would like to admit, the baring of the exegete's soul. No one can talk about the meaning of the Bible without describing what it means to him. And when he does that, he tells the reader as much about himself as he does about the Scriptures" (Williams, 1973, p. 226).

the world" (Finney, 2001, p. 299). These positions impact the historians' practice of history as well as their body of work.

In the same vein, exegesis, as a historical discourse of religion can grant policymakers a distinct disposition or worldview that could trickle (in varying measures) into their practice of politics as well as their foreign policy. When institutionalized, the exegesis could characterize the state itself as an overarching framework of its identity. While the practice of politics might not always imply the extent of the impacts of exegesis, the policymakers' (by extension, a state's) political practices and foreign policy may unveil their underlying commitment to exegesis. This could be a useful exercise in that it might reveal the inherent biases of policymakers when exegesis (actively or subconsciously) facilitates goal-oriented foreign policy, but then it might also imply that exegesis could leave out the role-defined return of religion in IR or international relations. But since the latter has been discussed in the literature and provided its insights, this dissertation will deal mainly with the former.

3.2.3. *History in IR's Realism: criticism and opportunities*

Realism conditions the state's national interest on the material world's anarchical system defined through power maximization by states and the distribution of power across states to secure their survival and prosperity (Meibauer, 2021). Since neorealism and neoclassical realism assume an 'ahistorical importance of anarchy, systemic conditions and the balance of power', they also assume calculable capabilities and the observable behavior of other states to decide their own course of action among forms of 'hedging, balancing or bandwagoning' (*Ibid.*). Thus, the balance of power is not contextually dependent, but rather an "inescapable 'recurrence and repetition', by a cyclical theory of history", i.e., it is 'pessimistic about progress' (Guzzini, 2004,

p. 536). For IR realists, international relations are always amid power politics guided by materialist state/national interests operating within history's cyclicity. This distinct characteristic of realism follows a 'naturalistic' comprehension of theory and social science finding roots in the 19th and 20th-century debates on the 'philosophy of history' as well as IR's post-Second World War development that emphasized structure/space over time/context (Meibauer, 2021; Vaughan-Williams, 2005). History became redundant for analysis in narrowly defined assumptions and theoretical scope, that depended more on general scientific laws. History became a supportive argument for framing case studies and drawing lessons for policy making (Hobson & Lawson, 2008).

But should that imply that neorealism is ahistorical as suggested by its critics? Probably not. While neorealism does emphasize emerging (and persistent) state behavior patterns within the self-help system where any failure on the part of states to incorporate strategic learning can have adverse impacts on its survival in the long run, the strategic learning itself gets generated through preceding behaviors (in past) (Jennifer Sterling-Folker, 1997). While a detrimental state behavior can come from observing a similar one in the past, examples of successful state behavior in the self-help system are also extracted in history. The problem, however, is the subsequent behaviors in the long run conform to similar patterns within the confines of the neorealist assumptions and model, where anarchy enjoys center stage. The structuralist theory also shapes and restrains state behavior, thereby increasing the likelihood of similar outcomes. Additionally, the emphasis on material factors and power needs to be reconciled with the possibility that they can be interpreted and perceived differently by foreign policy actors (Wivel, 2005, pp. 355–356).

Meibauer (2021) argues that the move from 'idiographic to more nomothetic conceptions of history' is what brought about the historicist challenge to neorealism. He finds neoclassical realism (NCR) as a probable ground that allows for historicization through its intervening variables and structural modifiers – by conceptualizing history as a unit-level experience, and as shared/common experience respectively. Incorporation of not a static, but dynamic history in IR potentially contributes to the whole discipline, by mapping the relationship between IR, history, and the human condition that constantly engage with the (inaccessible) past and could provide greater clarity on how history (as a whole) flows through international relations and its observable outcomes on the international politics. Another reason for engaging with history in NCR is to overcome what Taliaferro et al. (2012, pp. 102–103) call soft positivism wherein objects of analyses are assumed to share similar characteristics to create (theoretically stated and empirically-supported) generalizations. Subsequently, treatment of contextuality as a step towards historicization, and not as an outlier observation could enable a higher appreciation of the role of states' ideational elements in foreign policy making.

One major point to be emphasized is that NCR and neorealism differ in their ideas of balance of power, despite sharing some assumptions. Even though the balance of power characterizes one of the central conceptions of realism in IR, the balance of power has been used in several ways within realist writings, indicating the need to differentiate between them. Barkin (2009, pp. 240–241) has identified four such varied uses of the term balance of power:

      i.   Historically descriptive: in Morgenthau's *Politics Among Nations* with reference to the 19th-century system in Europe

ii. Generic and descriptive: to indicate a generic distribution of power across states (at any specific time), without implying any (particularly defined) balance (and thus, not implying a self-replicating system, or states acting to maintain a balance)

iii. Self-regulating system's feature: Waltzian balance of power in reference to a specific distribution wherein no great power can accumulate adequate power to change the system's very structure (this is not a foreign policy and something that happens by itself within the system)

iv. Foreign Policy option: in reference to foreign policy, where states actively pursue balancing the power of other states (or institutions) that threaten it[14] (suggesting that it is a choice opted by policymakers/state).

Neorealism's balance of power only considers the present distribution of power under anarchy, it overlooks interwar diplomacy (Sterling-Folker, 2009, p. 78). Classical realism clearly distinguishes itself from neorealism in that the former grants agency to the policymaker/state to choose to exercise a balance of power and secure/improve its relative position in international politics. Consequently, the state follows national interests and can opt to balance not only against expected threats but also unexpected ones that it calculates as plausible. NCR takes a middle position; it emphasizes itself as a theory of foreign policy but is distinct from classical realism (Rose, 1998). NCR allows for foreign policy prediction through interaction between system structure and (characteristics of) domestic politics, while also letting state characteristics determine foreign policy, rather than letting agency decide foreign policy (and here it retains a characteristic of neorealism) (Barkin, 2009).

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[14] IR scholars have identified this particular use of balance of power as a foreign policy, as a core concept in classical realism, rather than its generic use (Barkin, 2009; Guzzini, 1998, pp. 45–46)

NCR employs unit-level variables to clarify "distortions from neorealist baseline expectations (type I), general dynamics of foreign policy and grand strategic choice (type II) and patterns of state behavior across the international system (type III)" (Meibauer, 2021). While NCR retains the assumption of material-driven national interests and distribution/ranking of capabilities in the world system which is anarchic, it leaves space for incorporating historical experience and learnings that influence domestic politics and foreign policy (Taliaferro, 2009). History can also find expression in ideology and nationalism or how groups construct their identities through differentiation, which can eventually get institutionalized (Sterling-Folker, 2009, pp. 110–111).

NCR's intervening variables account for collective identity, strategic culture, and nationalism which encode in themselves historical experience that can build domestic political structures, perspectives, and policymakers' or states' strategic narratives more likely to successfully resonate with the domestic audience. History can find its way through "socio-cultural, political and economic experiences and contexts" even when viewed as something "subjectively interpreted, selectively narrated and instrumentally used"[15] rather than an objective or static history. So should history be considered as another variable in the NCR? Meibauer (2021) finds this use of the word 'variable' problematic and suggests that history be considered as a "latent factor, a basis from which more active variables (such as perceptions, beliefs, ideology or strategic culture) can be drawn". In other words, considering history as that which provides a distinct character to the intervening variables, can further clarify its position within NCR.

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[15] Historical narratives here are considered as those underpinned by language, culture, ideology, individual beliefs and cognition as by historical events (Meibauer, 2021), such that history becomes a pool of "perceptions, persuasion and programmatic principles" that impact foreign policy process.

History could also be considered to impact the density and character of the international relations system, where history could impart meaning to the system itself (Taliaferro et al., 2012). As Meibauer (2021) argues for the inclusion of history in the international system:

> History, conceptualised as past interactions (i.e. objective contexts) and/or shared memories and experiences, conditions the significance of the distribution of power. It affects the units' interactions, rather than each unit individually, for example, by making the threat from rising power more salient in specific situations than others.

NCR can consider history in several ways – series of events, common experiences, or factors that increased the likelihood of certain state behavioral outcomes. He argues that historical experiences can generate restrictions as prospects for units as well as patterns of interaction in the given system. He invokes the example of events such as war, conflict, or cooperation impacting foreign policy and the overall environment comprising states. In turn, these historical events also have the capacity to impact the experience of anarchy, and perceptions surrounding the cost of security and conflict, merits of non-conflicting diplomatic engagement, etc. (Meibauer, 2021). History, being non-material, risks fuzzing the differences between NCR and other approaches like constructivism, such as by introducing history that impacts independent variables which in turn impact other variables, a certain repetition of the loop might get generates, whereas NCR tries to distinguish itself from other approaches by constraining the systemic outcomes it seeks to explain by stating that the structure maintains (Taliaferro et al., 2012):

the dominant influence over the range of systemic outcomes that are possible and states do not determine the structure of the international system through their policies, but rather have an 'impact' on it.

The above explanation does not offer clarity over the extent to which the 'impact' could affect the 'structure of the system'. In any case, by dealing with history NCR can provide a deeper exploration of the nature of state behavior when held contingent on its historical experiences (or alternate histories in experience, assuming each state could have a distinct version of the same history in its experience and that all sates in the system do not get impacted by the history in the same way or extent), while at the same time increasing the scope of its own explanatory power as a theory.

3.2.4. History and religion through exegesis in Neoclassical Realism

The extent to which history should be included in NCR, and whose history should be part of the analysis (referring to the historicism debate earlier in the chapter) can be debated, but what opening of this door in NCR offers is much larger – possibility to introduce newer and more creative methodologies that are inter-disciplinary as well as inclusive of fringe or extra-discipline specializations. Meibauer (2021) suggests that "It presents an opportunity for scholars to contribute new puzzles, cases, and concepts to a still-growing school of thought, and thereby recapture some of the broader realist tradition's dynamism". How then can exegesis be introduced in the neo-classical realist framework to inform not just the domestic-level intervening variables, but also study the impact of religion (as a historical discourse) on foreign policy and (possibly, to some extent) international politics?

A possible path is provided by hermeneutics, which is a term closely related to exegesis and is defined as the study of interpretation and is associated with Hans-Gorg Gadamer's *Truth and Method*. In the context of religion, while exegesis is understanding religion as a historical discourse (assumed to be factual history), hermeneutics would be the answer to how this reading of religion as a historical discourse should be conducted i.e., how a text (here religion) should be interpreted. While there is not a direct relation between hermeneutics in religion and IR, given the former's affinity to theology, there is some merit in introducing what is called the cycle of hermeneutics to explore the possibility of re-iteration concerning religion and its relationship with international relations in the NCR framework. First, while religion itself can be held to be outside the system defined in NCR, exegesis on the other hand can be assumed to stay within this system, impacting and being impacted by the domestic/international politics. In a similar vein for hermeneutical realism, "while real things are independent of individual interpretations, such things are not independent of being interpretable in general" (George, 2021).

The hermeneutical cycle gives another breakthrough in understanding how the interpretation of a text works. Proposed by Heidegger, the hermeneutic cycle, as the name suggests, creates a loop of understanding, where the process and experience of interpretation offer new understanding not based on previously held beliefs, but by opening the possibility of implicitly understanding those presumptions. In the context of understating history as a whole, which comprises parts, can only be understood completely through an understanding of the whole, which itself is dependent on an understanding of the parts – all leading to a deeper and newer understanding generated through the interpretive experience.

To make way for exegesis, the international system can be divided into whole and parts, the former referring to the system itself and the latter representing the foreign policy respectively (Figure 2).
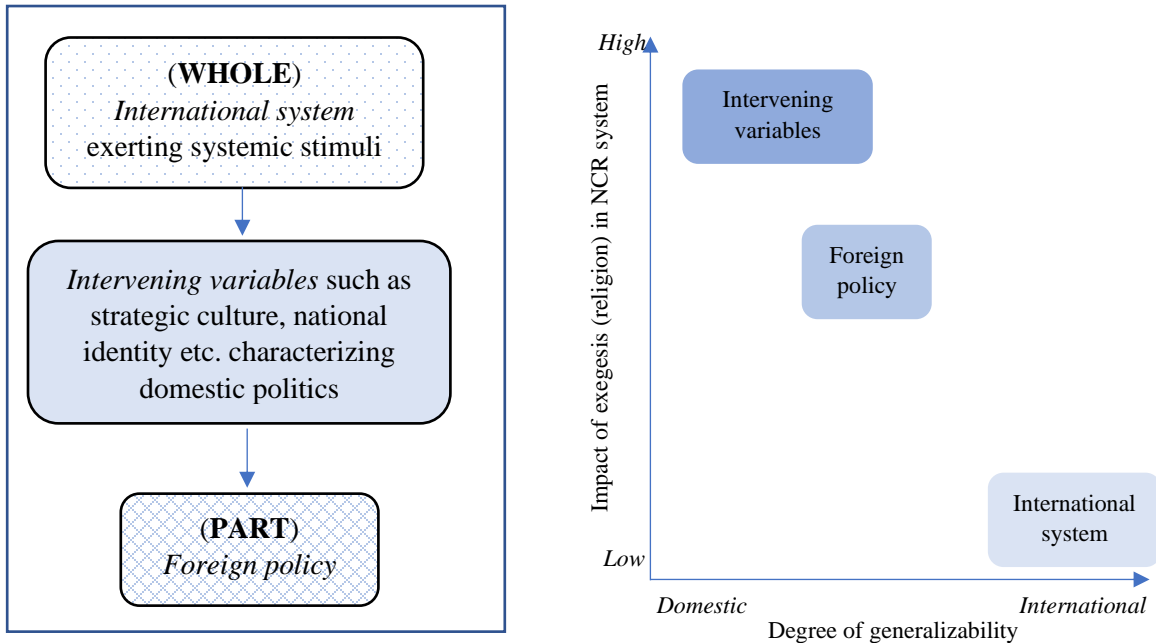
Figure 2 Religion in NCR model.

Source: Prepared by the author.

Such representation makes it easier to visualize exegesis as an impacting factor more clearly i.e., the factor affecting intervening variables. Also, a vertical visualization (in Figure 2) focuses more on the 'whole and part' (hierarchical) relationship, while making way for the flow of exegesis (religion) through the international system as conceptualized by NCR. While the primary flow of exegesis conforms to NCR model's assumption of systemic stimuli impacting foreign policy of a state through its intervening variables (which are characterized by exegesis), there is a possibility of examining ways/conditions under which exegesis in foreign policy could have an impact on the regional/international politics, thus creating a hermeneutical loop – one that necessitates the understanding of part for the whole, and whole for comprehending the parts.

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This cycle or loop in NCR could be considered as a parallel loop operating in the NCR, which if overlooked, provides only an angular picture of international politics instead of a more comprehensive one. Thus, what religion through exegesis, characterized by history, provides to the NCR is a greater explanatory power of how religion impacts foreign policy and inter-state relations.

It must also be noted that the way exegesis is defined and characterized in NCR, it can be assumed/ hypothesized to have varying degrees of impact on the 'parts' of the 'whole' system (Figure 2). The more generalizable the part, the lower the extent to which exegesis could exercise influence on it. The immediate implication is that given the multiplicity of exegeses (domestic historical discourses) by multiple exegetes (states), exegesis has a greater degree of influence on domestic-level intervening variables i.e., ones that directly interact with the exegesis such as (religion-influenced) national identity, strategic culture, etc. Foreign policy, while bearing a certain impact of exegesis, gets affected by the international system in general as well, so the impact on foreign policy is mixed. International politics, or the whole, is much farther from domestic politics, and thus, the impact of exegesis here is comparatively least (not to say nil).

To address the problem of *whose* history, exegesis deals with only the official historical discourse, intended at understating the text (religion), and thus, will only deal with how a state incorporates historical experience encapsulated in religion, through exegesis by either channeling it in national identity, state-backed nationalism, national/historical memory and institutionalized through means of constitution, national symbols and policies enshrining the same.

Operationalization of religion through exegesis in the framework of NCR not only provides an explanation of what religion (potentially) does in the international system but also

demonstrates a way to define, characterize and do history in IR, particularly NCR. In turn, such an exercise can create more interaction points and spaces for discussion among different theories and approaches that seek to investigate either religion or history (or both) in IR theory and international relations. Furthermore, religion (and by extension, history) do not need to be looked over for their probably multi-dimensional impacts in international politics, which has been witness to the role of identity, memory, and narratives in altering state behavior as well as characterizing inter-state relations.

3.3. Research Methodology

3.3.1. *Qualitative research on Exegesis in NCR*

Having addressed the way to do history above, the next step is to elaborate on how to do religion, i.e., how to incorporate history and religion through exegesis in NCR.

In her study of politics and secularism, Hurd (2008) noted that research on secularism risks running into epistemological and ontological traps. The study of religion is quite similar since there is no one standard way to do religion; researchers have conducted quantitative as well as qualitative analysis to demonstrate the linkages between religion and politics, at times, without providing a definition of religion. This study aims to avoid falling into one trap of defining religion through the metaphysical aspect and focuses on what religion has to say about temporal affairs. However, to proceed with the concept of exegesis, this research makes some assumptions, as described in previous sections: true religion, like the true past, is inaccessible; there is an analogous relationship between history-historiography and religion-exegesis; exegesis as a state exercise by the exegete (state) can also bear different interpretations of the same

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religion, but once formalized in law, institutions, and constitution, the exegesis becomes integral to state identity.

The dissertation takes up a qualitative research approach in order to answer the second main research question which relies on empirical case studies. According to Creswell (2014), the qualitative research approach investigates and comprehends the value individuals and groups assign to a societal issue. For understanding these values and meanings, the research poses certain questions and engages in data collection, analysis as well as interpretation. Qualitative research allows researchers to conduct a pragmatic knowledge inquiry into real-world problems with real-world consequences mainly through experimental as well as case study approach (J. W. Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2003). The case study approach is comprehensive because it "investigates a contemporary phenomenon… in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (Campbell & Yin, 2018, pp. 13–14).

Case study method, employed by sizeable research in international relations, usually aims to "understand and capture broader and more general underlying dynamics" of the specifically chosen case(s) for two main objectives (Ruffa, 2020, p. 1133). First, the selected cases are studied in depth by the researcher to explain the complex nature of a specific phenomenon. Second, the researchers also endeavor towards generalization of the selected cases on to a much larger scope of the observable universe. However, with these two objectives comes a key challenge for case study methods, since in order to provide a deeper analysis of a case, the researcher sometimes needs to compromise on the generalizability of his research. On the latter, another challenge to the case study method that includes interpretive approaches is that they do not provide a generalizable conclusion to the observations (Spanner, 2022, p. 43). However, case

studies through the interpretivist approach offer a key advantage as "meaning and beliefs are the most important factors in the study of social processes...social inquiry could play an important role in uncovering the deep meanings that exist beneath the surface appearance of observed reality" (Kurki & Wight, 2010, p. 24).

This dissertation aims to focus on South Asia, particularly the nations India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to uncover and explain how religion impacts nations' view of themselves, their perceptions about their neighborhood, and how religion could impact foreign policy. While NCR as a theoretical framework assumes the impact of domestic politics on foreign policy by states, the framework remains very flexible to allow for newer methodologies, and newer approaches within the scope of NCR to examine the relationship between domestic politics and foreign policy.

For this dissertation, NCR provides the needed flexibility to examine both- history and religion parallelly, which define and in turn get defined by each other. This dissertation thus heavily depends on text analysis and discourse analysis to trace the intertwining of religion with politics and identity through exegesis in South Asia. Exegesis, the concept proposed in the dissertation, is an interpretation of history through a religious lens and is an exercise conducted by all states that seek to define themselves (as well as the other). Since religion is examined through exegesis, an interpretive approach is a better fit for the selected case studies. Three different and in-depth analyses are conducted of the impacts of exegesis on how the three nations: narrate their history, understand religion and secularism, frame and conduct foreign policy.

The interviews offer researchers a deeper insight into the particular subject being studied, as well as provide alternate views about the same topic. This is one of the biggest advantages of

in-depth interviews which enable the interviewer to steer the questions to issues that matter, attain significant information on history and perspectives (J. W. Creswell, 2003). Thus, by engaging in meaningful inquiry about a topic, the researcher can weave the responses of the interviewees to underline key arguments and highlight avenues of further knowledge generation for the readers. In this research, in-depth interviews were conducted between October 2022 to January 2023 with 12 policy experts (including 1 that responded via email). All interviewed policy experts are from academia, think-tanks, and media organizations that publish on South Asian affairs, or aspects of religion in international relations (Table 2).

Table 2: List of interviewed policy experts

Name	Institution	Date
Pramod Jaiswal	Nepal Institute for International Cooperation & Engagement	Oct 26, 2022
Sukh Deo Muni	Jawaharlal Nehru University	Nov 16, 2022
Dhananjay Tripathi	South Asian University	Nov 21, 2022
Smruti S Pattanaik	Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses	Nov 22, 2022
Akhil Ramesh	Pacific Forum	Nov 23, 2022
Salma Malik	Quaid i Azam University	Nov 28, 2022
Aleksandra Jaskólska	University of Warsaw	Dec 23, 2022
EXP-1	University of Silesia in Katowice	Dec 29, 2022
EXP-2	University of Freiburg	Jan 04, 2023
Soma Basu	Tampere University	Jan 07, 2023
EXP-3	Warsaw University	Jan 10, 2023
EXP-4	Agence France-Presse (AFP)	Jan 22, 2023

Source: prepared by the author.
Note: Experts that preferred to remain anonymous have been provided with codes EXP-[number].

The experts were interviewed on several aspects of religion, politics, and regional politics in South Asia (particularly, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan), such as the influence of religion on

South Asian politics and security; views on secularism as a practice in South Asia; the extent to which religion defines the domestic politics; the impact of religion on national identity; religion as a factor in inter-state conflicts; the impact of religion on foreign policy; aggression against religious minorities; and, the possibility of future conflict resolution in South Asia. Key points highlighted by the interviewees have been quoted in the dissertation in relevant analysis sections. Besides, numerous other primary governmental resources including government websites, policy reports, and defense white papers, are complemented by secondary resources included in the study such as research papers on subjects related to South Asia, religion and identity, religion, and international affairs.

Overall, this research aims at providing an alternative method of employing exegesis in NCR, to allow for the incorporation of religion in not only domestic politics but also foreign policy. Since the study centers on the interpretation of history through a religious lens, an interpretive methodology is taken up to enable the investigation of the concept in the area of South Asia. Yanow & Schwartz-Shea (2009) argue that "an interpretive methodology holds that there is no direct, unmediated access to reality (a basic claim in interpretive epistemology) …but interpretive researchers seek to problematize reifications and processes of reification, instead seeking out the human roots of accepted routines and institutional forms and the tacit knowledge that forms the a priori background for all interpretations". In the context of this research, interpretive research allows for employing exegesis as a concept to investigate the impacts of religion, while not delving into religion itself. What is of concern in the dissertation is how states understand and interpret their own history through a religious lens, i.e., exegesis.

This research poses three sub-questions to the main research question:

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2.1.   How has religion impacted the mutual perceptions in South Asia among the triad of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh?

2.2.   What conflicts/convergences in post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, are caused by religion?

2.3.   How has religion manifested in foreign policies? How that, in turn, has impacted regional/inter-state security architecture in South Asia?

The above questions cover domestic national narratives and national history, an examination of how religion fits into national identities, and finally how religion impacts foreign policy, respectively. Ripsman (2017) in the article on Neoclassical realism has noted that there can be several creative avenues for improvement of NCR as an approach to foreign policy analysis. This research introduces different research methods to answer the three questions above that depend on text interpretation, discourse analysis, and foreign policy analysis within the overall NCR framework. Figure 3 illustrates this dissertation's approach to answering the aforementioned questions.
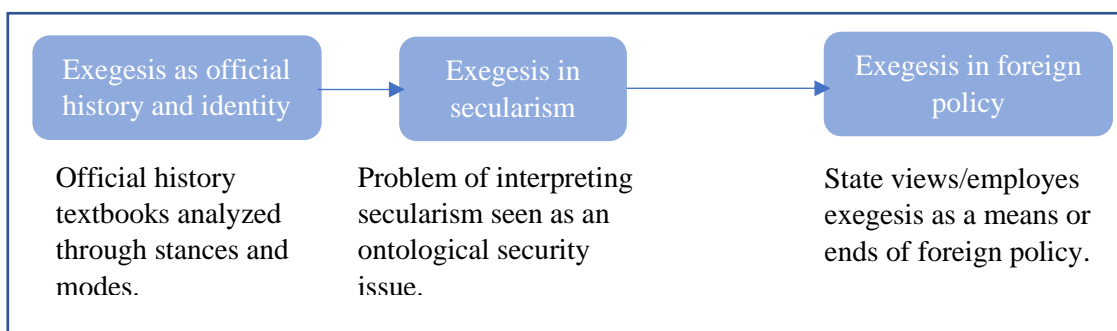
Figure 3 How to do religion: incorporating different concepts through exegesis in NCR.
Source: Prepared by the author.

For question 2.1 regarding examining religion in official histories and identities of states, state-distributed history textbooks (which are references to the official history of the state), from grade 6 to grade 10 from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are analyzed through a reformulation of the works of Barton & Levstik (2004). Their work is turned into a useful analytical tool to examine school textbooks instead, in this dissertation by proposing four modes/stances:

- identification mode/stance: analyzing whether official history attempts to mimic the religious past.

- analytic mode/stance: analyzing what are the causes of a certain historical event, such as war, in the state's official history.

- moral response mode/stance: analyzing how a state wants its future generations to remember its past, and if that narrated history is related to a religious reading of the past.

- exhibition mode/stance: how history is displayed in the school textbooks.

The state-distributed textbooks (taken as official versions of state history) are analyzed, to reveal how these states identify themselves, as well as the 'other'. Events from the shared past in the Indian subcontinent, such as pre-partition religious violence, perspectives on invasions and empire in the pre-British era, views on British India and colonial experience, 1947 partition and decolonization process, as well as recent historical events such as the 1971 Bangladesh War of Independence are examined. These perspectives and official historical discourse are then compared among India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh to unveil how religion impacts national history. This analysis aims at uncovering what history and whose history states narrate, and how religion (through exegesis) impacts the official state history and construction of identities.

For question 2.2, the dissertation approaches secularism in two ways. One, secularism is not a binary opposite of religion and can exist in several different versions. This view allows the examination of different religion-based understandings of the word secularism and offers a comparative analysis of how states interpret and implement secularism. Two, interpretation of secularism by recently independent modern states divided on the basis of religion, can be an ontological security threat. Here, ontological security can be defined as the existential need of a state to provide a stable and continuous existence over a period of time, as a response to uncertainty regarding its identity (Giddens, 1991). Mitzen (2006) has argued that states can face ontological security threats or challenges, different from physical security issues. The question aims to examine the post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, and explain how religion has impacted the process of achieving ontological security through state identity, and how religion has impacted secularism as a result.

For question 2.3, Kant's idea of *happiness* as a natural imperative for all rational human beings is adapted into the idea that *sovereignty and security* are the natural imperative for all states as rational actors. The dissertation then redefines Kant's hypothetical imperative (conditional to achieve another end) and categorical imperative (unconditional and the end in itself), into an analytical tool that allows the examination of how states employ religion (exegesis) in their foreign policy calculations. The assumption here is that for states, religion could provide more than just ontological security, i.e., religion could play a more active role in diplomacy and foreign policy decision-making. The engagement of religion (exegesis) is categorized into two possible outcomes: religion as a means to achieve another foreign policy end (reformulating Kant's hypothetical imperative); and religion as the key factor in defining what is security and sovereignty (reformulating Kant's categorical imperative). Foreign policy

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decisions of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh related to state security, border policies, and bilateral relations are analyzed through the above lens to understand how religion through exegesis impacts the foreign policy of states, and how those outcomes could in turn impact regional security.

As mentioned earlier, the research question for empirical case study research for this dissertation is: How religion has impacted and shaped South Asian international relations? The reason for selecting South Asia as the case study for this research is because the region has witnessed a presence of religion that has pervaded public as well as political spaces despite the establishment of democratic modern nation-states after a long period of colonial experience. British India, divided in 1947 into India and Pakistan on religious lines, saw the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, despite religion. At present, the three states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh which form the basis of the research's case study, have shared history spanning centuries, and see themselves as distinct states with clashing historical narratives.

Geopolitical developments in the Cold War era with strengthening US-Pakistan ties, deepening India-USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) relations, and the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), underlined the ideological, political, and economic rivalry between the two power blocs represented by the US and the USSR (Chadha, 2023). The India-Pakistan ties and then the triad of India-Pakistan-Bangladesh relationships have been examined and explained through their mutual economic, political, and strategic clashes on one hand and regional gains through their amicable relations, on the other hand. However, the religious clashes and the lasting impacts of the same on their civilizational discourse as well as foreign policy, have gathered less attention as factors that could impact regional security in the subcontinent. Hence, to answer the research questions (2.1 to 2.3), first, data was collected in the form of studying the

constitution of the three nations, speeches, and writings of the key historical figures in the three nations (such as M.A. Jinnah, M. K. Gandhi, J.L. Nehru, Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, etc.). The school history textbooks were studied and analyzed to uncover the varying or clashing perspectives on common events in the past such as wars, armed clashes, policies regarding religious freedom, etc. Additionally, foreign policy-related documents from the governments or ministries of defense and foreign affairs were also accessed.

3.3.2. *Analytical framework: Methods for answering the Research Questions*

The dissertation basically answers two research questions. The first one is a theoretical question: How can religion (exegesis) be factored in IR? This chapter has proposed a theoretical framework that not only enables the operationalization of religion in Neoclassical realist theory but also allows for the conceptualization of the secular through the religious lens of exegesis.

The second research question is an empirical case study:

2. How has religion impacted and shaped South Asian international relations?

To answer this, the subsequent chapters will address three sub-questions in the following ways (also, illustrated in Figure 4):

1. Introduction		
2. Literature Review		
3. Theory & Methodology (RQ-1)	**How** can religion (exegesis) be factored in IR	
4. Exegesis in Identities (RQ-2.1)	**How** has religion impacted the mutual perceptions in South Asia among the triad of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh?	
5. Exegesis in Secularism (RQ-2.2)	**What** conflicts/ convergences in post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh are caused by exegesis?	
6. Exegesis in Foreign Policy (RQ-2.3)	**How** has religion manifested in the foreign policies? How that in turn has impacted regional/inter-state security architecture?	
7. Conclusion		

Figure 4: Analytical Framework for the Dissertation

Source: Prepared by the author.

2.1 How has religion impacted the mutual perceptions in South Asia among the triad of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh?

- This question is answered by analyzing how religion, through exegesis forms the frame of understanding the neighborhood in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh through different readings of shared history. State-sponsored history textbooks' analysis reveals how exegesis has impacted not just identities and reconstructed memories, but also how exegesis has established the "us" and "other" in the context of regional conflict and rivalries.

- Overall, it demonstrates how exegesis (religion) impacts national histories/official perspectives of shared pasts.

2.2 What conflicts/convergences in post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, are caused by religion (exegesis)?

- To answer this question, the chapter first examines the existence of secularism and religions in the three South Asian nations. Exegesis makes it possible to trace the evolution of the secularisms in the three nations and then examine their interaction with religion domestically and regionally. It paves the way to study both- conflict resolution and the lack of it among the three nations.

- Overall, it demonstrates how regional/global international relations impact exegesis (religions), which in turn redefines secularism(s). In other words, it seeks to show how religions and religion-defined secularisms interact with each other.

2.3 How has religion (exegesis) flowed into foreign policies? How that, in turn, has impacted regional/inter-state security architecture in South Asia?

- This question is answered by conducting a foreign policy analysis of the three nations, focusing on religion-based foreign policy as well as religious foreign policy.

- Overall, it demonstrates how exegesis (religions) impacts foreign policy and how that foreign policy in turn reshapes regional inter-state relations.

The following chapter presents the case study analyses of the exegesis in understanding the nation's past through a distinct state exegesis of the official history of the three states, namely, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Chapter 4
History at Crossroads: Exegesis and politics in education

4.1. Official History as Projects of national narratives

Official history, as history done by government-appointed historians, has been understood as "the work of historical offices that serve all branches of the federal government" (Trask, 1989). A closer reading of this history, at times, reveals the official history to be a state-sanctioned version or judgments of the past events, "often leaving the implication that the official view is the final view" (*op. cit.*). The latter suspicion about official history can be tied closely with what academia considers federal projects of propaganda, doctored history, the official version of the truth, etc. An official history, which "presents a special outlook or plea that serves the government…, may have to overlook or even suppress pertinent information...It cannot, consequently, meet the tests of objectivity, balance, and independence of judgment" (Blumenson, 1963). Official history, or classic national history, also serves the purpose of reciting the foundation, process, and advancement of a nation-state thus representative of the state identity or consciousness (Bevir, 2008).

While official history, popularized by the state, has found its way into national narratives and school textbooks, it remains distinct from academic history, which remains relatively 'marginal' (Mandler, 2002, 2006). Another characteristic of official history has been mythmaking. Collini (1999) has questioned alternatives to official history but also argued that the official historian's narration needs to strike the right balance of myth, a curated

understanding of the nation and its past. Addressing alternatives to official history, Mandler (2002, 2006) has stated that it is the myth-creation by official histories, that has provided a distinct space and identity to academic history. National histories, too, change over time, partly contingent on their viability and serviceability to the policies and objectives defined by the nation-state.

A. D. Smith (1991) distinguishes between the Western and non-Western emphasis on native culture and its role in defining the national identity as narrated by official history. The Western view focuses on the necessity of being native to one nation, while choosing one's distinct belonging, whereas the non-Western view continues to affiliate and identify based on the community of common descent, which implies narrating the nation as "first and foremost a community of common descent" (A. D. Smith, 1991). Bevir (2008) has classified narrating the nation into two categories. One, the pre-1970 developmental historicism in social science history that neglected "meanings, beliefs, desires and the whole range of human behaviour" to determine "objective social factors by seeking to establish regularities, classifications and quantitative correlations". The post-1970 narration of "national characters and traditions" through the "production of a cultural memory that constructs nations as organic units" is termed radical historicism (Bevir, 2008). One outcome of this move from development historicism to radical historicism is that while the former has lost its epistemic legitimacy in favor of the latter, the latter would not give way to the former. Bevir (2008) argues that social science histories can only be explained by "relating them to their specific contexts, not by appeals to trans-historical correlations and classifications" (Bevir, 2008). In terms of national histories disseminated as mass education, the implication is that the context-specific histories risk being dominant narratives that sideline the representation and voices of minorities or those invisible to the state.

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In states, where religion-based conflicts have played an important role in their formation, politics, and culture, the probability of finding varied national histories, of states with a common past, is higher. This leads to the following research questions, as addressed in this chapter:

i.   How has religious exegesis impacted/affected the construction of national identities, i.e., "religion-backed imagined communities" in post-colonial South Asia?

ii.   How has religion impacted/affected the national narrative, i.e., how viewing history through the religious lens has generated distinct memories and identities of the three nations (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) with a common past?

To answer these questions, state-prescribed history textbooks of the three nations (mainly Grades 6 to 10) have been analyzed to understand how these states not only narrate their histories but also to comprehend if their understanding of their pasts is also distinct as well as impacted by their religion-defined 'self'. School history textbooks (state approved) from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh are selected for analysis due to the following reasons:

- Intent: state-prescribed history textbooks aim at creating patriotic future generations who share the belief of a common past and believe in the project of the nation, as narrated by the state

- Production: these history textbooks describe and imply state priorities regarding national narrative and national identity reproduction, which in turn reflects in their decision-making

- Discussion: Textbooks are also sites for uncovering debates around *who* is "us", *what* is (official) history, *why* a state did what it did, and, *how* a certain historic event happened and shaped the national destiny

These textbooks, thus, could reveal more than just history; they demonstrate how history is read, revised, and retold through exegesis, i.e., a state exercise where not only identities are derived from religion, but an *interpretation of religion as a historical discourse* is undertaken to narrate a common past. History is read through a religious lens to draw parallelisms between the national past and the religious past. But before discussing how exegesis defines and narrates nations, it is important to discuss how textbooks treat history and the readers of history.

4.2. History as Textbooks

Modern nations seek 'socialized' new generations that can be model citizens (A. D. Smith, 1991). This role of inculcating inter-generational nationalism can be undertaken through mass education as well as mass media. However, nationalism, then, is not just a doctrine, philosophy, or political ideology but a "historicist culture and civic education, one that overlays or replaces the older modes of religious culture and familial education." (A. D. Smith, 1991). This observation is crucial when analyzing state curricula in nations with strong affiliations to religion. While exegesis offers a view of religion as a historical discourse, combining it with politics generates a (religion-inspired) nationalism emphasizing "a political mythology and symbolism of the new nation (or the 'nation-to-be') that will legitimate its novel, even revolutionary, directions in the myths, memories, values, and symbols of its anti-colonial struggle, its movements for social and political liberation and its visions of distant heroes and 'golden ages' that may inspire similar self-sacrifice today" (A. D. Smith, 1991). While A. D. Smith (1991) is referring to civil education that cross-cuts linguistic, ethnoreligious, and cultural plurality, the political mythology need not be secular and can be influenced by religion or be a

religious exegesis that determines state identity that transcends the straitjacket understanding of modern nation-state. Civic education (including form and content), then, becomes the foundation of "territorial nationalism and the identity it seeks to create" (A. D. Smith, 1991) for nation-states. In other words, it is through "compulsory, standardized, public mass education systems" that the state hopes to "inculcate national devotion and a distinctive, homogeneous culture" (A. D. Smith, 1991).

Anderson (1983), through the conceptualization of a nation as an imagined community, opens the possibility to view students/children as part of the 'family of nation's schools', wherein the students/children as readers of the textbook are located (in a textual way) within the national boundaries. The textbooks, thus, offer an "official" version of history, that seeks to produce a reader with possibilities of indoctrination and ideological subjugation (Ahier, 1988). Coward & Ellis (1977, p. 50) argue that for this official history to be "intelligible at all", the subject must regard "the discourse of narration as the discourse of the unfolding of truth". The construction of the reader as a subject of homogeneous national identity becomes crucial for navigating between the signifier and 'signified' of the history textbook, i.e., the subject being able to play the identity between 'who' and 'what' in history such that "reading a state's national narrative provides the subject 'unfolding of the truth'" (Ahier, 1988). In this context, an important criterion to uncover exegesis in history textbooks would be the ability to find the positionality of the student (as representative of a homogeneous national identity) as assumed by the school history textbooks. This would include a discussion of what is a state's national identity as projected through its official history, enables it to be different from other nations with a common history and shared but intangible past.

Another implication is exploring the missing histories in the textbooks to present a clearer distinction between what is the viewpoint of the historiographers and what insignificant aspects of history don't find their way into the school textbooks. For instance, in the British school textbooks until 1930, geography and imperialism were intertwined through a description of the Empire's colonies characterized by religion, caste, and race. Ahier (1988) mentions that Mulley's *The British Empire Overseas* (Nisbet's geography Class Books Series, 1930) describes Indians as "The people vary from brown, highly civilized Hindus to dark, wild Deccan races, little better than savages" with brief allusions to Brahmin religion, Mohammedans and Sikhs (Ahier, 1988). The Bishop of Nagpur, in British India aimed at enabling Churchmen to gain an "intelligent understanding of the past, which will stand them in good stead in the work which lies before them" since for him as representative of the Church of England India, "History is the record of the gradual unfolding of the will of God, of which we men are the ministers…We look back, not for patterns and precedents, but for lines of movement, that we may conform ourselves to them" (Chatterson, 1924). This book came as a response to the East India Company Act of 1813, which enabled Christian missionary activities for religious propagation, and civilizing missions in British territories and established the Crown's sovereignty over British India. The Bishop of Nagpur, states that the Church of India would now "take her share in the conversion of India to Christ. She is here to draw men of every race and creed into the one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, of which we are a branch" (Chatterson, 1924).

However, the task of the church was not without obstacles. There was an obvious clash between Hindus and Muslims in British India, an intergenerational struggle reminiscent of not only power but also of a civilizational clash. The religious clash was dealt with differently by intellectuals of different religious communities in British India. Jaffrelot (2015) argues that

towards the end of the nineteenth century, Muslims began losing administrative powers to educated (English-speaking) Hindus under the post-1857 British policy that established several universities wherein the British sought large numbers of trained Indian youth that shared "their world view". It also reflected the Muslim population's reluctance to promote English education and rely largely on Quranic schools that were an obligation for good Muslim families. Syed Ahmad Khan, representing the educated Muslim elite and speaking about the Muslim community explained this social situation before the 1882 Education Commission stating that Muslims "began to look upon the study of English by a Mussalman as little less than the embracing of Christianity" (Lelyveld, 1982, p. 99). Jaffrelot (2015) evaluates that, as an outcome, Muslims were considered hostile to the British administration, describing the Aligarh College founded by Syed Ahmed Khan as a "skillfully designed means of indoctrination... Students left with a powerful sense that they were Muslims, that being Muslim was the central identity of their lives." In his mission to establish an educational institution on Islamic lines, Syed Ahmed Khan also undertook the task of religious exegesis with "his most serious efforts in the direction of Qur'anic commentary, a laborious effort to go back to the original text and make new sense of it" (Lelyveld, 1982, p. 89).

The College became one of the grounds for intellectual movement of the communal argument, i.e., the "two-nation theory" that saw Muslims as a distinct community (and thus, a separate state) from non-Muslims (largely comprising Hindus). For Jawaharlal Nehru, overwriting the communal issue was crucial for a unified national narrative necessary to overturn any attempts towards the partition of British India, or even viewing religious communities as separate nations. His version of history does not present "a historically informed analysis that could explain the roots of the division that was threatening to break the social fabric apart in the

mid-forties" (Chakravatry, 1993). As Chakravatry (1993) has assessed Nehru's understanding of India's history, "questions of power and conflict between the Hindus and the ruling Muslims are in general written out of the script in order to foreground the notions of synthesis and unity... thus, Nehru decides not to deal with the 'communal question'...Specificity is sacrificed to preserve the idiom of historical continuity."

4.3. Analyzing school textbooks as projects of official history in South

Textbooks, particularly school textbooks in South Asia have caught academic attention and have been analyzed by several scholars over decades. Kumar (2001) argued that even after six decades of partition, national textbooks in India and Pakistan contested over a common past, claiming it to belong to entirely one state. This has led to these textbooks rarely addressing their neighbor in an objective way, to the extent that some events in history are read in reverse; textbooks read history from impacts to causes, instead of causes to impacts, to selectively hide flaws in narrative or irreconcilable differences between the event and claims.

Following the case with other history textbooks across the globe, famous personalities are projected as ideals for students to emulate and learn from. Naseem, 2010 (p. 104) analyzed the 1998 social science textbooks from Pakistan and revealed "a gendered architectural binary between Hindu and Muslim spaces of worship" where Muslim mosques are spacious and well-lit while Hindu temples with idols are small, claustrophobic, and dark. This has found equivalence in the description of Hindu houses reflected in the grade 6 textbooks from Punjab in Pakistan.

Naseem (2010) has argued that there is a distinction between an architecturally unpreferred pre-Islamic Hindu space and an architecturally preferable post-Islamic Muslim space.

Flaten (2017) has compared Indian history textbooks with previous books (R. S. Sharma's *Ancient India*, Satish Chandra's *Medieval India,* and Arjun Dev's *Modern India*) through a Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) combined with decontextualization applied to the historical narrative. The study concluded that the 2007 set of history textbooks presents evidence-based history (through primary sources), much unlike their predecessors. The previous books, in contrast, emphasize "a sense of pride in being an Indian" and the books were "more concerned with what the past could offer the present, how it could underline certain values and how it could facilitate integration and pride" (Flaten, 2017).

Regarding the specific case of education in Pakistan, F. Rahman (1982, p. 58) has questioned the traditional Muslim education system and stated that, unlike school education, it has created the "same dualism between the religious and the secular, between this-worldly and that-worldly, from which Christianity, for example, had suffered from its very beginnings…. The "religious" scholar had become a "professional" in his own field, but he was ignorant of and unable to cope with the problems of the world he lived in". Durrani (2008) has demonstrated how Pakistan's curriculum presents national as well as gender identities of being a 'normal' Pakistani woman or man. These narrowly defined national gender identities derive from Islam to distinguish between what is 'normal' or acceptable and what is not.

Durrani & Dunne (2010) have also examined textbooks in Pakistan and concluded that national cohesion is encouraged by equating Pakistani identity with Islamic identity. Though the study does not elaborate on what an Islamic identity would include, it does emphasize that an emphasis on Islamic identity tends to overlook other groups within Pakistan. In the specific case

of Bangladesh, S. Roy et al. (2020) have argued that faith, institutions, and education in Bangladesh impact national identity and minority communities. The challenges for the government include designing curricula that inculcated shared values by way of education to resolve communal issues. These challenges are even less understood by Bangladesh's religious educational institutions, while these institutions (Islamic madrasas and Catholic schools) are misunderstood in turn.

These studies include discourse analysis through varied approaches such as comparisons with past textbooks (history, social science, language books, etc.), or present comparisons with media as texts to highlight what constitutes national identity and to contest official histories in these nations. According to Barton & Levstik (2004, p. 46), affiliation and belongingness to a community require common historical identification. However, any such identification or community linkage involves distancing and cutting off from others, leading to episodes of violence, power struggles, and animosity. Barton & Levstik (2004, p. 64) state that "long-standing community conflicts are used as justification for new rounds of hostility; ancient defeats and victimization become an excuse for terrorism, and glorification of national history leads to wars of aggression".

In their study of school textbooks, Barton & Levstik (2004, p. 64) propose four "stances" or modes towards assessing how students approach the history textbooks, and how students could impact participatory democracy: identification stance (establishing that a certain aspect of present life resembles a specific period in history), analytic stance (evaluating the cause and impacts of a historical event), moral response stance (judging and remembering the past event), exhibition stance (displaying history with its details and accountability). These stances or modes offer useful tools for analyzing textbooks as well. These stances can be utilized for

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assessing/studying history as narrated through religion, i.e., exegesis. The chapter examines the

textbooks from the South Asian nations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh on the criteria in

Table 3.

Table 3: Adapting Stances to evaluate students of history to Stances/modes for analysis of History textbooks.

Stance/Mode	Key questions	Points of history textbook analysis
Identification	What, if any, is the exegesis-inspired view of the past? Who are we? Where do we belong? Who is "us" and "other"?	• Similarities between the present and the history narrated in textbooks. • Establishment of national identity based on the version of history narrated in textbooks, to know "who we are"
Analytic	What caused a certain event? What is the evidence of historical narratives? What is history?	• Analyzing historical events to determine their causes and impacts. • Identifying and establishing linkages between events and assessing the presence of common trends, patterns, etc.
Moral response	What are the lessons for the present (and future)? What should be remembered and what should also be condemned?	• Detecting if and how textbooks rejoice inspiring events and also make judgments about what needs to be called out. • Finding and highlighting the ideas governing moral right and wrong
Exhibition	How is the history exhibited in the textbooks?	• Detecting exegesis as history education through the exhibition in textbooks • Analyzing placement, presence, and positions of history on display, such that it serves as a reservoir of visual information but also lets readers make inferences and interpretations

Source: Stances for student evaluation from Barton & Levstik (2004, p. 64)

Using the framework in Table 3, this chapter aims to analyze the most recent history

textbooks prescribed by the states, namely, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. Since all three states

have also published English versions of the school textbooks, this chapter focuses on history

textbooks from Grade 6 to Grade 10 (during which history is a mandatory subject in schools)

(Table 4). While not all schools in the three nations compulsorily teach these state-prescribed

textbooks, the fact that these books strictly follow the national policy of education and

curriculum makes these books an appropriate choice for analyzing the official histories of the

three states and enabling their comparison.

Table 4: Textbooks analyzed in the chapter.

Bangladesh (National Curriculum and Textbook Board)	CODE	India (National Council of Educational Research and Training)	CODE	Pakistan (Federal Ministry of Education)	CODE
Bangladesh and Global Studies Class 6	BG6	Our Pasts-I Class 6	IN6	History Class 6	PK6
Bangladesh and Global Studies Class 7	BG7	Our Pasts-II Class 7	IN7	History Class 7	PK7
Bangladesh and Global Studies Class 8	BG8	Our Pasts-III Class 8	IN8	History Class 8	PK8
Bangladesh and Global Studies Class 9-10	BG9	India and the Contemporary World-I Class 9	IN9	Pakistan Studies Class 9	PK9
		India and the Contemporary World-II Class 10	IN10	Pakistan Studies Class 10	PK10

Source: Prepared by the author.

In Bangladesh, history textbooks are published by the National Curriculum and Textbook

Board, with textbooks titled Bangladesh and Global Studies, which range from discussing a brief

history of world civilizations, and then situating 'Bangladesh' in South Asia's Bengal region

before, during, and after the colonial experience. Indian textbooks are published by the National

Council of Educational Research and Training and cover a range of world history, including that

of the Indian subcontinent leading up to the partition. However, the textbooks do not discuss

India's foreign policy explicitly, and neither do they elucidate the causes or consequences of the

India-Pakistan wars or Bangladesh's War of Independence in 1971. One striking feature of these

textbooks is the title *Our Pasts*, an informed decision (as mentioned in the book IN6, p.6), to underline the possibility of several pasts or versions of histories for different groups of people in the same geography. In the case of Pakistan, revised textbooks are titled History (grades 6-8), and Pakistan Studies thereafter (grades 9-10), all published by the Federal Ministry of Education. The books mainly trace the Islamic dynastic rule in the Indian subcontinent and thereafter focus only on Pakistan in the subcontinent, the latter approach being quite similar to Bangladesh textbooks. The succeeding sections discuss and contrast the national histories and identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

4.4. Exegesis and identity: us and the "not us"

4.4.1. *Pre-colonial subcontinent*

The beginnings of all three textbook sets discuss the Indus Valley Civilization, which provides a point of entry into the subcontinent's common past, to each claim a piece of history to locate themselves in that past. For Pakistan textbooks, it occupies a few pages of the grade 6 textbook discussing the visible past of the Indus Valley civilization sites in present-day Pakistan's Sindh and Punjab provinces. The book states that "Aryans were of superior race and were invaders" and on an obsolete Aryan Invasion theory which claims Aryans as refugees had

> strong physique and were warmonger by nature. This made easier for them conquer of India. (sic) (PK6, p.16)

Bangladesh textbook for grade 10 discusses the Indus Valley Civilization as one among others in distant lands in Pakistan and India but highlights the excavation under the "Bengalee

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archaeologist Rakhaldas Bandopadhyay" who found a Bronze Age civilization (BG9, p.15), where there was no "recognizable" religion though goddesses were worshipped, and so were elements of nature. The Indian textbooks imply the civilizational identity of the nation by establishing linkages between the words used for the country, i.e., India and Bharat. Bharat referred to "people who lived in the northwest, and who are mentioned in the Rigveda, the earliest composition in Sanskrit (dated to about 3500 years ago)", while "India comes from the Indus, called Sindhu in Sanskrit". Unlike the Pakistani or Bangladeshi textbooks, which maintain that Aryans came to the Indian subcontinent and established the Vedic culture, Indian textbook take a step to debunking the Aryan Invasion theory by stating that the ancient "Iranians and the Greeks who came through the northwest about 2500 years ago and were familiar with the Indus, called it the Hindos or the Indos, and the land to the east of the river was called India" (IN6, p.4). The textbooks take different directions toward exploring and examining their pasts while attempting to narrate an official history.

Bangladeshi history mirrors Pakistan's understanding of Aryans arriving in India and disseminating the basic Hindu philosophy, practices, deities, and even Hindu clothing to the Hindus of the region, without providing historical references for the same. Overall, while Pakistan textbooks do not cover world civilizations in any detail, Bangladesh and India's textbooks provide considerable space to civilizations across the globe. However, due to Bangladesh's swift move to Janapadas of Ancient Bengal that traces history around its present political territory, most of the subcontinent's history is left unclaimed for Indian textbooks to discuss in a civilizational context, linking the Indian identity to its geographical past.

The Bangladesh curriculum provides textbooks on major religions (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity) to complement those in history, such that students can choose their

religious texts based on their religious identity. In Pakistan, the curriculum recommends the study of parts of the Quran, though the history books quote the holy book several times in the context of the constitutional Pakistani identity or the role of women in contemporary society. However, the curriculum does not show a deep, but rather superficial understanding of minority religions. As a case in point, Pakistan's national history is traced back to the invasions from the western frontiers of the subcontinents by the Turks, and later the Afghan fighters; introducing the Mahmud of Ghaznavi (997-1030AD) who "defeated many Hindu rajas" and arrived at Somnath to break the temple, the book quotes him saying,

> … 'I am a breaker of idols and not a seller of idols'… Hindus believed that he who would attack Somnath, himself will be annihilated. When Ghaznavi came to know he himself attacked the temple and conquered it. (PK6, p. 34).

In a similar instance, is the description of destroying another temple,

> …so in middle of Debal was a temple of Hindus with red flag and belief that no one could harm Hindus till the flag was up. Muslim used "catapult", a stone hit and flag fell down. It discouraged the Hindus. (PK6, p. 33).

The grade 6 textbook is replete with examples of Muslim rulers establishing Islamic rule in conquered idolatrous Hindu lands. A concentrated emphasis on Turkish, central Asian, or Afghan rulers indicates, then, that Pakistani identity, through exegesis of Islamic history, seeks connections with specific time period in the past, i.e., during religious (Islamic) expansion against the Hindu "other". However, despite the mention of 'the Hindu' that was defeated or captured, the Pakistani textbooks do not define or explain who the Hindu is, while using Hindu and India interchangeably. In contrast, the Indian textbooks conduct a different exegetic exercise

through conscious mention of civilizational identity which goes hand in hand with Vedic knowledge, encompasses 'the Hindu' as representative of Indic faiths, finds presence in populations identifying as Hindu, etc. Sanskrit has been discussed in detail as the mother of several languages of the subcontinent belonging to the Indo-European family, and also as the language that ties to the civilizational identity of Bharat or India (IN6, p.36-37). Bangladeshi textbooks, on the other hand, while tracing their pre-colonial history, discuss several smaller kingdoms in the region, one of which, Banga, has been mentioned to have its name derived "from Chinese word meaning swamp", and is stated to be the origin of Bengali language and Bengali nation (BG9, p.30). Moreover, there are several references to Brahmin, Brahmana, Vaishnaba, and Shaiba as distinct religions, instead of being different sects of Hinduism (BG9, p.43-44), that lost ground to Islam in the region with Khilji establishing the Muslim empire in Bengal in the thirteenth century.

Both Pakistani and Bangladeshi textbooks describe Turkish rulers as heroic, and their conquests have been portrayed as peaceful advancements into territories in the subcontinent. For instance, "the Turkish hero…Bakhtiyar Khilji believed in his own abilities" and when he "began to raid and plunder small, neighboured Hindu kingdoms…the news of his heroic deeds spread very rapidly" (BG9, p. 61-62). Hindus have been portrayed as the conspirators, for instance, Sultan Jalauddin Khilji (1290-1296AD) was "not a man who rules by force, established friendly culture, due to his kindness" but Rajputs / Hindus "turned against him" (PK6, p. 46). Similarly, non-Muslim communities have been identified as the cause of the decline of the Muslim empire in Delhi:

> Delhi kingdom mostly populated with Hindus who considered Muslims as alien. They showed no
> sympathy and interest towards the Muslim rulers and government, so they ever think of their

freedom from the Muslim. They always used lame excuse to payment of revenue and taxes. They dared to refuse to pay revenue/tax. (PK6, p. 46)

Because of Akbar's pro-Hindu policies, Hindus became so fearless that they started demolishing tombs and mosques and constructed temples in their place. Muslims were facing hard times in Hindu majority areas.... After them came the practical Muslim rulers like Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb who further enhanced the following of Shariah. (PK7, p.68)

However, Bangladeshi textbooks dedicate separate sections discussing differences between Muslim as well as Hindu society and culture during Bengal's Middle Age (BG9, p. 88-92). The Muslim society in Bengal has been described as comprising three tiers: higher class (Sayeed, Ulema, and similar influential classes experienced in Islamic education), middle class (government employees), and lower class (weavers, farmers most of which were Hindus) (BG9, p.89). On religious conversions, the books mention "A huge number of Hindus and Buddhists of Bengal were converted to Islam" (BG9, p.90) in contrast to Pakistani textbooks which mention that Muslim society was "based on the principle of human equality and brotherhood. These principles were new for Hindu society because they were divided in a brutal caste system... just and equitable system of Islam impressed the Hindus deeply" (PK7, p. 69).

4.4.2. *British India and decolonization: experience of religion*

The starkly divergent and sometimes even opposing views of key historical events are evident in the school textbooks analyzed. While British rule is a bitter colonial experience in Indian textbooks and an unfavorable event that ended the Muslim rule in Bangladeshi books, it is Hindu-favoring, and anti-Muslim in Pakistani textbooks. In Indian textbooks, the 1905 Bengal

partition was done to contain Bengali politicians and split Bengali people, and not for

administrative reasons,

> …what did "administrative convenience" mean? Whose "convenience" did it represent?... The
> partition of Bengal infuriated people all over India. All sections of the Congress – the Moderates
> and the Radicals, as they may be called – opposed it…The struggle that unfolded came to be
> known as the Swadeshi movement, strongest in Bengal but with echoes elsewhere too…as the
> Vandemataram Movement. (IN8, p.113)

In Pakistani textbooks, the Bengal partition was a favorable move that benefitted Muslims and

indeed happened on administrative grounds, and thus, the Hindu party Congress (Indian National

Congress) opposed the division,

> Hindus started Swadeshi movement and opposed the division. Muslims refused as there was
> opportunity for their development. Hindus compelled Muslims by "different tactics" to
> participate. Hindu youngsters began attacking Muslims as well on British. Muslims reacted
> against the annulment in 1911 because they had been promised development by separation.
> British enacted other reforms to "appease Hindus" (PK8, p. 27).

The Bangladeshi textbooks reflect similar views about reactions to the Bengal partition in 1905,

stating that while Hindus (aristocrats) opposed it, Muslims were in agreement on the move for

their development. However, in 1911 annulment of the Bengal partition left Hindus happy,

Congress victorious and Muslims disappointed, leading to riots and a search for a distinct national identity. However, the Bangladeshi textbooks consider several reasons for the 1905 Bengal division, including administration, a huge population of Bengal, and socio-economic causes, but emphasize that the division was to benefit British rule and weaken the Indian national unity,

> The united strength of Hindu-Muslim solidarity and the united Bengal were threats for the British rulers…. wanted to kill two birds with one stone. (BG9-10, p.141)

One reason why the subsequent Swadeshi movement which included boycotts and burning of British goods did not transform into a national movement, has been cited as

> the Swadeshi movement was also influenced by Hindu rituals and customs for which the Muslim community kept a distance from this movement…It left an all-out negative influence upon political, social and national activities which ended with dividing of India in two countries. (BG9-10, p.143-144)

Another effort to reunite the communities against British rule was M. Gandhi's Khilafat movement, urging Hindus to take up the Muslim cause protesting against the British imposition on the Caliphate (the Turkish Sultan in the erstwhile Ottoman Empire). Indian textbooks heavily focus on M. Gandhi's role in events leading up to India's independence where Khilafat

> …was also the call of Mahatma Gandhi who always saw India as a land of all the people who lived in the country – Hindus, Muslims and those of other religions. He was keen that Hindus and Muslims support each other in any just cause... The leaders of the Khilafat agitation, Mohammad

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> Ali and Shaukat Ali, now wished to initiate a full-fledged Non-Cooperation Movement…Large
>
> parts of the country were on the brink of a formidable revolt. (IN8, p.117)

Pakistani books look at the events differently and do not support the above description of events.

The Muslim League had been established in 1906 right after the Bengal partition, had made

Congress accept a separate electorate for Muslims, and that implied Congress' acceptance of

Muslims as a separate nation (PK8). Khilafat was a movement of Muslims for the Caliphate but

was appropriated and overtaken by Gandhi who, "used all energies of Muslims for his personal

repute and benefits of Hindus" (PK8, p.32). The event has also been described to contrast the

personalities of Gandhi with Jinnah, such that "Gandhi was a clever leader", while Jinnah, who

was an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity,

> …was convinced that Hindu leader were not at all prepared for any kind of understanding. He
>
> became disappointed and had to say that we had different and separate ways from Hindus. Thus,
>
> both the nations parted their ways. (PK8, p.34).

Bangladeshi textbooks center the Khilafat movement on Muslims seeking reinstation of the

Caliphate, but the books mention that it marked the first time Muslims participated in the anti-

British movement. While the Non-Cooperation Movement, which marked several religious

communities harmoniously agitating against the British, lost ground eventually due to a failed

Armed Movement in Bengal that was led by hidden organizations, but did not gather steam in

Bengal,

…since there were some Hindu rituals like taking oath by touching the Geeta, reciting verses in front of Goddess Kali were mandatory for revolutionaries, the Muslims felt obstacles to take part in the revolution. (BG9-10, p.149)

There is also a considerable difference in the official histories regarding the demand for Pakistan and the eventual 1947 partition. Indian textbooks cite Muslim League's 1940 resolution as the key point in history seeking independent states for Muslims in British India's north-west and east, while also speculating over the origins of this idea. The 1945 talks with the British over the independence of India failed because "the League saw itself as the sole spokesperson of India's Muslims…The Congress could not accept this claim since a large number of Muslims still supported it…" (IN8, p.130). For Pakistani textbooks, the Muslim League had "led the Muslims and presented them honestly" while the Hindus wanted to "usurp the rights of Muslims due to their majority" (PK8, p.54). Congress has been portrayed as maltreating Muslims, but somehow leading to the conclusion that with the League:

…having passed the Pakistan resolution... British and Hindus created many obstacles but Muslims were determined. They had clarity that they were struggling for the right cause so all the tricks of enemies were turned down. (PK8, p.56)

Indian and Pakistani books are unanimously silent about the role of leaders like Subhash Chandra Bose, who founded the Indian National Army, and after Japanese military assistance, returned to India to begin an armed struggle against the colonial empire. It only finds mention in

Bangladeshi books that cover this key aspect of history and connect the same to the overall end of British rule, and subsequent partition of 1947.

4.4.3. *Partition and post-partition conflicts*

In Indian textbooks, partition violence has been singled out as the factor which dampened the joy of independence from British Rule, though the books do not discuss the religious animosity that led to unfortunate massacres (IN8, p.129-130):

> Many hundred thousand people were killed and numerous women had to face untold brutalities during the Partition. Millions of people were forced to flee their homes. Torn asunder from their homelands, they were reduced to being refugees in alien lands. Partition also meant that India changed, many of its cities changed, and a new country – Pakistan – was born. So, the joy of our country's independence from British rule came mixed with the pain and violence of Partition.

India's lessons from the partition were reflected in the Constitution that "guaranteed equality before the law to all citizens, regardless of their caste or religious affiliation" (IN8, p.130). Interestingly, the books also mention that while there was political interest in establishing India as a Hindu state, after the formation of Pakistan exclusively for Muslims,

> …the Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, was of the opinion that India could not and must not become a "Hindu Pakistan". Besides Muslims, India also had large populations of Sikhs and Christians, as well as many Parsis and Jains. (IN8, p.130)

Here the discussion is left incomplete without elucidating whether Sikhs and Jains had been long considered part of the umbrella Hindu identity, or they were considered as separate religions by

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Nehru. Neither do the books offer a clarification of what constitutes a Hindu identity, given that the grade 6 history textbooks began with a discussion of ancient and civilizational references that are unmistakably Hindu. Pakistan's textbooks offer a narrower but specific narrative of events leading to partition and thereafter. The British, in those books, have "completely favored Hindus and Congress" in the division of territories such that "many minority areas of Gurdaspur were given to India...it made possible for the India to have easy access to Kashmir" (PK8, p.62).

Similar "injustice" was done in the demarcating boundaries of East Pakistan (present Bangladesh), implying a desire by Pakistan for a larger part or the whole of Bengal. The last section of the grade 8 textbook in Pakistan discusses the role of minorities in the establishment of Pakistan, quoting Jinnah, "Pakistan would be solution of all problems of minorities" (p.65). However, the grade 9 textbook furthers the same narrative as its preceding ones, stating that Jinnah was successful in making "conspiracies of Hindus and British unsuccessful" (p.31) since "In India the settlements of Muslims were burnt to ashes…bloodshed was caused and the Muslims were forcibly pushed into Pakistan..." (p.33). The books do not explain why some Muslim leaders remained in India, or how, then, could India end up with a Muslim population much larger than the entire nation of Pakistan. India, by now synonymous in the textbooks with Hindus, is again invoked on the demise of Jinnah in 1948, around when "India occupied Hyderabad Deccan" and "…In this way India continued working against Pakistan's stability" (p.33).

Kashmir has occupied a crucial space in Indian civilizational history and contemporary relations between India and Pakistan, but Indian textbooks remain silent about the region apart from mentioning Kashmir's ancient leaders such as the 15-16th century order by Nand Rishi and Wali (IN7, p.110) and another queen named Didda. Hereafter, Indian textbooks do not cover any

key turning points in history such as the Kashmir conflict, or other events such as the war with Pakistan in 1965, the 1971 Bangladesh Independence Movement, or the 1999 Kargil War. The curriculum is designed to compare India's nationalism with European nationalism and discuss cultural affinities, sports, and arts. However, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi textbooks delve into these events in varying depths and their implications for their national identity. For instance, concerning Kashmir, Pakistani textbooks mention that Muslims in Kashmir, who were in a large majority, wanted accession to Pakistan:

> When Pakistan came to existence, 80% of the population of Kashmir were Muslims. They desired to annex Kashmir with Pakistan but the Dogra Rajah, Hari Singh, was against Pakistan and Muslims. He made coalition with India cunningly and permitted Indian forces to enter into Kashmir. He provided an opportunity to India to take control. The Kashmiri Muslims started jihad and got 1/3 areas of the valley freed from the Indian forces. (PK10, 35)

> Raja Hari Singh the Hindu ruler of Kashmir fled to India and announced accession to India against the wishes of the Kashmiri people… In 1948 India sent troops to Kashmir and tried to capture it illegally, but Kashmiri Mujahideen liberated the area of Azad Jammu and Kashmir from India...if war starts again on this issue it can turn into nuclear war. (PK9, p. 41).

Besides being the only mention (among all textbooks analyzed) of the possibility of a "nuclear" war over the Kashmir issue, the Pakistani textbooks mention Kashmiri Muslims / Kashmiri Mujahideen without much clarity on the nature of the organization conducting jihadists attacks (it could be a reference to the terrorist outfit Hizbul Mujahideen that has been conducting similar acts of terror in the region). The mention of Kashmir in the context of nuclear war also reflects

the gravity of the issue in Pakistan's Islamic identity and "trans-regional ambitions"[16]: its approach to militantism in Kashmir; and the centrality of Kashmir in Islamabad's foreign policy. Despite the Kashmir conflict, Pakistani textbooks argue that the 1947 partition, though unfair in the distribution of territory, was a necessary right step toward an independent Muslim identity.

In contrast, Bangladeshi textbooks approach the partition of India as incomplete, with a persisting mistrust between the representatives from West and East Pakistan. There is an insistence over Pakistan being a "misfit state with non-Bengalee administrators" due to which "Bengalis united to ensure their rights (BG6, p.11), since "after independence of Pakistan, there was confusion about policies and ideologies of state" reflecting a "crisis of solidarity and unity" (BG7, p.2). Pakistan's military rule has been discussed in great detail for two key reasons: its impact on Kashmir and India, and its impact on the East Pakistan psyche.

For the 1965 India-Pakistan war over Kashmir, the grade 10 book states about Pakistan's then military dictator "Ayub Khan had long cherished to invade India and capture Kashmir…he attempted to create rowdiness in Kashmir sending armed guerilla at first…" (p.184). The books attempt to narrate the difference in the military capabilities of the two wings of Pakistan in the 1965 war:

> … [Indian Army] forced back Pakistani soldiers [and] marched forward to Lahore…in such deplorable situation of Pakistan, Bengalee soldiers fought with great courage and saved Lahore from a fall. (BG 10, p.185)

However, in the same section, the textbook also conveys the mistrust regarding India and the possibility of invasion in the Bengali lands,

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[16] (EXP-3, personal communication, January 10, 2023).

The second Kashmir war aroused a strong anti-Ayub sentiment… [due to] absence of any defense mechanism in East Pakistan…This unguarded land could be invaded by Indian forces anytime… Ayub Khan failed to ensure the security of East Pakistan despite the life-risking valiant contributions of the Bengalee soldiers to protect Lahore. (p. 185)

West Pakistan's relations with East Pakistan have been described as "colonial", where the former deprived the latter of racial equality, native language, culture, economic prosperity, job opportunities, or education. A whole chapter is dedicated to discussing how the imposition of Urdu, spoken only by 3.27% of Pakistanis, against 56% of the overall population of East Pakistan was a deliberate attempt to curb Bengalee freedom and introduce Arabic script to write Bengali. West Pakistan "even tried to create hindrance in the celebration of Pahela Baishakh mentioning that the festivity had Hindu influence" (BG 9, p.188).

Overall, regarding the history of East Pakistan, Bangladeshi textbooks take a different perspective of the Muslim League whose "undemocratic attitude" and "faulty policy" of overlooking the development, economy, politics, and culture of East Pakistan led to a severe crisis (BG9, p.174) as well as split in the League with the formation of the Awami Muslim League. The Bangladeshi textbooks (such as for grade 10) have dedicated chapters to discuss key issues such as the Language Movement, Pakistan's military rule (1958-1969), 1970 elections, and the war of independence, etc., but the most striking feature is the space allocated exclusively for the discussion of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, his life, and contributions, followed by his assassination and impact on the nation of Bangladesh.

The 1970 Liberation War has been discussed in the context of undemocratic military rule in West Pakistan and its desire to keep East Pakistan subjugated, and unrepresented in the parliament. Thus, West Pakistan under the leadership of dictator Yahya Khan, his appointed

Governor-general of East Pakistan Tikka Khan, and leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto are held responsible for the unsuccessful Mujib-Yahya talks on March 24 and the March 25 genocide under Pakistan Army's 'Operation Searchlight'. While the genocide led to the March 26 declaration of war for the liberation of East Pakistan, the war went on until December 16 (establishment of Bangladesh).

There are two key divergences from Pakistani textbooks in this context. One, while Pakistani textbooks portray India's participation in the 1971 Liberation War as a conspiracy of Hindus, Bangladeshi textbooks describe India's engagement in the 1971 War as an outcome of a security issue for India, and India's humanitarian aid due to the huge refugee crisis from East Pakistan to India to escape violence (majority of refugees were Hindus). The other point of departure is the mass killings, particularly of Bengalee Hindus, carried out by the Pakistan Army, which are missing from Pakistan's history textbooks but have been described as the most atrocious genocide in history in Bangladeshi textbooks:

> It can be assumed from the malicious mass killings, assault and demolition inflicted on the Hindu community living in…Old Dhaka that Pakistani rulers had a more hostile attitude towards them. In the eyes of West Pakistani rulers, Hindus were synonymous to Awami League supporters and they were considered threats to the unity of the sacred Pakistan. It was also thought that they were backed and patronized by India. The acts of mass destruction and violence towards women out of such blind convictions reveal the extreme anti-Hindu feelings, animosity and dreadful detestation of the Pakistan army. (BG9, p.210)

Pakistan's version of this historical event is less complex and more sanitized. The separation of East Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh has been covered in merely a few pages in the class 9 textbook, as an outcome of the refusal to hand the "reins of the country" to Awami League after their 1970 election win, causing a "law and order situation in East Pakistan" (p.53). The West Pakistan Army is narrated to have "tried to improve the situation but it kept deteriorating day by day because of organization Mukti Bahini was busy spreading riots there…[and] …Indian army provided weapons to rebels and started training them" (p.54). India, according to the textbook, attacked East Pakistan with more troops after

> Pakistan Army had begun to gain control of most of the area … India succeeded in its nefarious designs…thus, on December 16, 1971, East Pakistan got separated... (p.54)

The textbooks consider India as the aggressor in the narrative and use 'Hindu' and 'India' interchangeably. For instance, while discussing the causes of the separation of East Pakistan, the book mentions that in East Pakistan, government jobs "were dominated by Hindus" and they (Hindus or India) were responsible for "stirring up separation sentiment under hidden motives" (p. 54). Hindu teachers have also been listed among the cause of the 1971 separation of East Pakistan:

> …education sector of East Pakistan was totally under control of Hindus. They poisoned Bengalis against Pakistan and aroused their sentiments. (p.54-55)

4.5. Who, what, why and how: examining the modes/stances of history in textbooks

The above discussion reveals some unmistakable trends in the arguments employed by the textbooks, to talk about a national past, and its significance in the understanding of who the nation wants the reader to be. In light of the preceding discussion, the analysis of exegesis-based national history in history textbooks can be discussed on the basis of four modes/stances, i.e., identification, analytic, moral response, and exhibition.

4.5.1.   Identification mode/stance: exegesis-inspired view of the past

Indian textbooks dig into a civilizational past to draw present continuity through the values of the constitution (the Preamble to the Constitution appears on the initial pages of all textbooks in the "Our Pasts" series). There is a deliberate avoidance of addressing the religious identity issues in Indian history, and what emerges is a very secular narration of the past, where religion was but one insignificant factor against the vast challenges of colonialism and partition. And yet, the textbooks *Our Pasts* begin each chapter with the introduction of one student, claiming a different religious identity, enquiring about some aspect of ancient history that the chapter seeks to cover. The British rule has been discussed in sufficient detail as the brutal colonial period and held responsible for intellectual, social, economic, and cultural decline of an eventually partitioned land on the basis of religion. Even in the other books for grades 9 and 10, the composition of national identity is expanded so wide that the counterpart to "us" is a civilizational "other" that is revealed towards the end of the grade 10 textbook; the books discuss Indian nationalism and European nationalism (again, giving the impression that Europe has a homogeneous identity). Table 5 presents a summary of how the history textbooks in India,

Pakistan, and Bangladesh understand the three nations, and how they take different turns at history-telling through state-specific exegesis.

Table 5: Contested histories and different shared pasts: a comparative analysis of history textbooks (analyzing history in textbooks through identification mode/stance)

Parameters	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh
Historical roots	Ancient India/Vedic civilization	Turkish-Afghan rulers, Mughals	Muslim Bengalees under Sultanate
We the nation	Secular, Sanskrit and other languages	Islam, Urdu	Islamic secular, Bengali
The other	-	Hindu India, Bengalee East Pakistan	Multi-religious India, Oppressive Pakistan
1947 Partition	Unnecessary and Unjust	Inevitable and just	Justified but incomplete
1971 War	-	Bengalee is not Pakistani. Hindu conspiracy	Necessary and Just
The oppressors	British	Hindus	Pakistanis
Minorities	Multi-ethnic and multi-religious	All minorities were anti-Hindu	"Brahmin" religion, Buddhists, Jains, Christians
Pre-Mughals	Rich history of Gupta and other Indian empires	Unstable Hindu rulers	Non-oppressive 200 years of Sultanate
Mughal Empire	Mughal society, religion and administration	Golden era of Islam	Power struggle between Bangladesh and Delhi rulers
British Empire	Oriental view of Indian history; oppressive	Hindu-appeasing, anti-Muslim	Power greedy Marwari Indian community assisted them
Absent History	Hindu genocide; partition violence, post-1947 history	Hindu kings, Gandhi, Nehru etc., Persecution of minorities	Role of minorities in the independence movement

Source: Prepared by the author.

Pakistan's textbooks elucidate the composition of Pakistani identity, which acknowledges the presence of religious and linguistic minorities or ethnic diversities but is dominated by an Urdu-speaking Islamic identity in the land where God/Allah is sovereign. Throughout the textbooks, the Hindu "other" contrasts with the nation's idea of a Muslim Pakistan. The official history of Pakistan thus is narrated through the advent of Islamic kingdoms under the Turkish,

Afghan, or Mughal rulers who at different points in history invaded and rules large parts of the Indian subcontinent before the British rule. Though there were several other empires that have ruled over the present territory of Pakistan, the state's textbooks nevertheless, claim only the Islamic empires as sites of national history and identity. Pakistani state identity does not project cultural affinities with Bangladesh, or civilizational one with its neighbor India. Consequently, according to the textbooks, religion is the common factor that binds the nation's identity with the larger Muslim world. British rule has been portrayed as anti-Islamic (and against the Caliphate), and thus, unjustly "appeasing" Hindus. Thus, Muslim identity has been securitized as something that is central to the nation's existence and needs protection. The grade 10 textbook discusses Pakistan's identity as a Muslim security state and its relationship with foreign policy:

> National security is always the fundamental objective in Pakistan's foreign policy…India conducted atomic blasts. Pakistan, in return, also conducted atomic blasts. It was a show of strength which gave an evidence of Pakistan being an atomic power. (PK10, p.31)

The ideological foundations of the nation, *Nazariya-e-Pakistan*, are also intrinsically linked to its sacred territory and foreign policy:

> Pakistan is an ideological nation with the Islamic base. The main objective of Pakistan's foreign policy is to protect the ideological borders of Pakistan. The stability of Pakistan is linked to the protection of Pakistan's ideology. It can protect its ideology only by establishing better relations with the Islamic countries. (PK10, p.31)

British rule has been labeled as yet another phase of atrocities and discrimination against the Muslims of the subcontinent while unjustifiably appeasing Hindus with the advantages of occupation, the standard of living, education, and even territory after partition. At the critical juncture of 1947, both the British and Hindus are the enemy conspiring to prevent the formation of Pakistan.

Bangladeshi textbooks maintain a constant awareness of the nation's geography and its association with the national identity as an Islamic nation with the presence of several religions. The books for almost every grade dedicate chapters toward discussion of the 1971 Liberation War and the separation from Pakistan. Thus, the task at hand for Bangladeshi textbooks is to craft a national identity that not only justifies separation from Indian Bengal but also Muslim Pakistan. The textbooks, overall, find the 1947 partition indispensable but incomplete, while the liberation of Bangladesh due to the colonizer-colonized relationship between West and East Pakistan has been ruled unavoidable. The grade 10 textbook elaborates on the Language Movement, i.e., the role of the Urdu-Bengali conflict in stirring the nationalist sentiments in East Pakistan, as well as the eventual military action against Bengalee civilians. However, the liberation movement also had its roots in the ideological split of the Muslim League into the Awami Muslim League, eventually called Awami League due to its more secular approach, as compared to the hardline Islamic approach of the League. Another reason behind liberation efforts has been cited as decades of racial discrimination by West Pakistan, something not mentioned in the Pakistani textbooks.

While the identification stance helps uncover how the three states view and understand themselves and their neighborhood but does not explain how states sustain their official histories and link them to present identity. In this regard, the analytic and moral response stand allows a

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deeper examination of the official histories in these books, to uncover why according to a specific exegesis of religious history, a certain historic event is significant, why it happened, and what are the moral implications or lessons from the same. It is not only in narrating *who* (components of national identity) that a state creates its distinct identity, but also in explaining *why* (highlighting the importance of chosen history) and *what did we learn* (highlighting moral lessons from a selective religious past), that a state maintains its official history. The moral stance becomes even more important when studying exegesis (understanding of religion) and history (version of past) together because state history becomes the bearer of lessons to be imbibed by nationalists and a reservoir of mistakes never to be repeated again by patriotic citizens.

4.5.2. *Analytic and Moral response mode/stance: Causes of historical events and lessons learned*

The school textbooks analyzed mention some sources for references but only Indian and Bangladeshi textbooks present instances of recorded history in several chapters dealing with the ancient or modern history of the subcontinent. Indian textbooks dedicate activity or fact boxes in the chapters to explore records of written history over centuries and famous works of each period. Similar to their Indian counterparts, Bangladeshi textbooks engage the reader in questions, with hypothetical characters through storytelling, but based on actual historical events discussed in the chapters. Events in the recent history of the liberation of Bangladesh are presented in detail, but like the Indian textbooks, some questions remain unattended. For instance, the grade 10 book mentions the military rule in Bangladesh under General Ershad when Islam was instated as a state religion in secular Bangladesh "against the spirit of the great War of

Liberation" (p. 252). But there is neither any discussion nor expansion on why the decision was made and why it has never been reversed in a nation where secularism is also a constitutional feature. Pakistani textbooks pose questions, limited to the text of the chapters. There is little space for creative thinking or analysis of a particular historical event. For instance, in the class 10 textbook, *jihad* has been equated with bravery and service to the nation (in the case of the Afghan *jihad* against Russia or the Kashmiri Mujahideen *jihad* against India in Kashmir) (p.15). Likewise, the Islamization Process during General Zia-ul-Haq's dictatorial rule (1977-1988) is unquestioned and listed as a significant historical event that asserted Muslim identity and made mandatory Islamic education and practices, without discussing the implications of such a policy on the general population or religious minorities (p.13).

As a result, exegesis drives the analytic stance/mode in school textbooks by helping nations select history to be narrated to younger audiences. Since religion becomes the lens of viewing the past, exegesis filters the past and retains only selective and relevant parts of history. Consequently, several aspects of the past do not make it to the official history of these nations: Indian textbooks remain silent about partition horrors or centuries-old religious violence and its impact on national memory and trauma; Pakistani textbooks are oblivious to any non-Muslim leadership in ancient/modern history since the textbooks argue that Pakistan's woes are caused by a nexus of British colonizers and traditional enemies- the Hindus; Bangladeshi textbooks maintain quiet on the persecution of minorities in Bangladesh today and the severity of Islamic extremism that the government is trying to counter. Exegesis also allows these textbooks to evade questions such as: did religious violence never occur before the British rule in India? What was the past or what is the future of a non-Muslim in Pakistan, who does not identify with the state religion? Why do religious minorities suffer discrimination in a Bangladesh, and how deep

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are the roots of religious extremism in the state? The books allow no inquiry into any of these questions; as in all official histories, in the analyzed textbooks history is not explored but dictated. Likewise, the nations have chosen their traumas and antagonists: for India, it is the 1947 partition caused by the British; Pakistan's existence is a constant struggle against a Hindu enemy state; Bangladesh suffered the atrocities by West Pakistan leading to the War of Liberation.

Despite the exegesis-driven omission of history, an important aspect of the books is the teachings they offer and imply for the readers through their official histories, i.e., the moral lessons from the lived traumatic past. All textbooks craftily identify an undisputed champion of nationalism in their official histories, a political figure, whose life history is the moral lesson for the readers. The readers, at no point in the book, are invited or permitted to question the authority of this historical figure. Indian textbooks narrate ancient history more objectively and in much less detail than the elaborate discussion of the colonial experience. British India's impact on the nation is narrated through the ideology, experiences, and personal events in the life of Mahatma Gandhi. The anti-British struggle in the grade 10 textbook, gains steam under the leadership of Gandhi, whose struggle mirrored his ideology:

> It is certain that India cannot rival Britain or Europe in force of arms. The British worship the war-god and they can all of them become, as they are becoming, bearers of arms. The hundreds of millions in India can never carry arms. They have made the religion of non-violence their own. (p.31)
>
> In many places local leaders told peasants that Gandhiji had declared that no taxes were to be paid and land was to be redistributed among the poor. The name of the Mahatma was being invoked to sanction all action and aspirations. (p.35)

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When they heard of the Non-Cooperation Movement, thousands of workers defied the authorities, left the plantations and headed home. They believed that Gandhi Raj was coming and everyone would be given land in their own villages. (p.36)

While Gandhi's assassination was a national shock, Gandhian ideology outlived him and has been narrated to have impacted both the Constitution as well as the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's thoughts about rejecting a Hindu India:

Besides Muslims, India also had large populations of Sikhs and Christians, as well as many Parsis and Jains. Under the new Constitution, they would have the same rights as Hindus – the same opportunities when it came to seeking jobs in government or the private sector, the same rights before the law. (IN8, p.130)

The books hint at the lessons to be learned from leaders (people's Mahatma, i.e., Gandhi) and political parties (the Congress under the leadership of Gandhi) that attempted to transform people's grievances into an organized struggle for independence and to forge a national identity. However, since the "Congress continuously attempted to resolve differences, and ensure that the demands of one group did not alienate another" as a result, "the unity within the movement often broke down" (p.49).

Pakistan's textbooks eulogize Mohammad Ali Jinnah for his intellectual contributions to the "two nation theory", being the sole spokesperson for the Muslims, and negotiating a partition based on Muslim land for the Muslim population. He was the only leader titled the Quaid-e-Azam, who has been quoted saying "the foundation of Pakistan was laid on that very day when the first non-Muslim was converted into Muslim" (PK9, p.4). The textbook asks why the demand for Pakistan was necessary when Muslims had the freedom to worship according to the Islamic

way even without partitioning the subcontinent, to which Jinnah's response is quoted as "…we fought for the creation of Pakistan because there was a danger of the denial of these fundamental human rights" (PK9, p.5). The implied lesson is that of "religion in danger", a popular rhetoric that echoes in Pakistani politics even today. He is a role model for the nation, and is treasured, in contrast to India's Gandhi who was assassinated:

> Jinnah never had chance to rest this further deteriorated his health... and in 1948 Gandhi was assassinated by Hindu extremist. (PK9, p.32)

Bangladeshi history, too, is replete with incidents of the struggle to gain independence from British India, and the violence preceding the liberation from West Pakistan. Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, given the title of Bangabandhu, has been the exemplary leader of Bangladesh's official history, whose life, struggle, and sacrifice have all been narrated parallel with the foundations, struggles, and transformation of East Pakistan to Bangladesh.

> Since emergence, disparity between the two wings of Pakistan was gradually escalating. Large scale attachment of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman with the mass people made him a people's leader in East Pakistan. (BG9, p.191)
> Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was recognized as the undisputed leader and forerunner the Bangalee for his role as the spokesman of the interest and autonomy of the Bengalees. (BG9, p.193)

He was at the forefront of the Language Movement, bringing together Bengali people in their struggle for independence from West Pakistan, and was also a secular leader who became the spine of the Awami League. Just as Sheikh Mujibur Rehman is the ideal for the nation, similar space in textbooks has been provided to narrate the contribution of the Awami League party and its role in the nation's foundation, such as the grade 9 textbook highlights the party's unique place in history "Awami League is the party that led the war of liberation" (BG9, p.213). Bangladeshi history textbooks emphasize the role of the Awami League party in the formation of Muslim (but secular) Bengali identity for Bangladesh, distinct from Islamist parties in the country that mirror political parties and leaders in Pakistan.

4.5.3. *Exhibition mode/stance: reading (exegesis) between the lines*

Textbooks have more than just words. While narrating a nation's past, textbooks are selective of what events are part of official history; but they are even more selective about what history they choose to show through other means: questions, activities, information boxes, pictures, or just placement of any of these elements. These form part of the exhibition mode/stance of the textbooks intended for readers to notice, interpret, and understand, in the context of the official history being narrated to them. For instance, Gandhi has been narrated as a visionary, well-versed in the Indian civilizational ideals of holistic development, and equitable and ethical growth. His follower is quoted alongside a picture of a steel plant in Bhilai, India:

> As Mahatma Gandhi's follower Mira Behn wrote in 1949, that through "science and machinery he [mankind] may get huge returns for a time, but ultimately will come desolation. We have got to study Nature's balance, and develop our lives within her laws, if we are to survive as a physically healthy and morally decent species". (IN8, p.137)

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The text is immediately followed by an activity box, implying a link between Gandhian ideals and contemporary problems:

> Discuss in your class whether Mira Behn was right in her view that science and machinery would create problems for human beings. You may like to think about examples of the effects of industrial pollution and de-forestation on the world today. (IN8, p.137)

There is also a visibly deliberate emphasis on the secular approach of the Congress Party versus the claims of the Muslim League which considered itself the only representative of the subcontinent's Muslims. Indian grade 8 textbook asks "Who did the Congress seek to speak for?", and answers it too with the following: "A newspaper, The Indian Mirror, wrote in January 1886: The First National Congress at Bombay ... is the nucleus of a future Parliament for our country, and will lead to the good of inconceivable magnitude for our countrymen...this Congress is composed of the representatives, not of any one class or community of India, but of all the different communities of India" (p.111). The same page also has an activity box, asking: "From the beginning, the Congress sought to speak for, and in the name of, *all* the Indian people. Why did it choose to do so?" The textbook, a few pages later (p. 118), displays a picture titled

> The people's Mahatma: A popular representation of Mahatma Gandhi. In popular images too Mahatma Gandhi is often shown as a divine being occupying a place within the pantheon of Indian gods. In this image he is driving Krishna's chariot, guiding other nationalist leaders in the battle against the British.

There are several pictures of Gandhi with other leaders, including, Maulana Azad (born in Mecca, a scholar of Islam and opposed to Jinnah's two-nation theory), Chakravarti Rajagopalachari (veteran nationalist and free India's first Indian Governor-General), Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel (President of the Congress in 1931), and Mohammad Ali Jinnah (ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity until 1920, and spokesperson for the demand for Pakistan) (IN8, p.124). Despite several pages dedicated to Gandhi, Nehru, and their quotations, a reader might wonder, was Congress the sole spokesperson for free India? and to answer that, a few sentences urge students to ask the teacher:

> Two important developments of the mid-1920s were the formation of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu organisation, and the Communist Party of India. These parties have held very different ideas about the kind of country India should be. Find out about their ideas with the help of your teacher. (IN8, p.119)

The Indian idea of a nation has been thoroughly discussed, and implied in the textbooks, which yet again speculate about the difference between India and Pakistan, in an imaginary boy's mind (IN8, p.131):

> Nehru wrote in a letter to the Chief Ministers of states: "... we have a Muslim minority who are so large in numbers that they cannot, even if they want, go anywhere else. That is a basic fact about which there can be no argument. Whatever the provocation from Pakistan and whatever the indignities and horrors inflicted on non-Muslims there, we have got to deal with this minority in a civilized manner. We must give them security and the rights of citizens in a democratic State".

It is followed by an activity:

Imagine a conversation between a father and son in a Muslim family. After Partition, the son thinks it would be wiser for them to move to Pakistan while the father believes that they should continue to live in India. Taking information from the chapter… act out what each would say.

The arguments have been provided, the prospects of the two nations have been indicated, and the implications of the emigration have been summarized in Nehru's quote. The activity that follows assumes the direction of the conversation, with the father being the decision-maker. Indian textbooks, in certain chapters, offer these activities with pre-indicated information boxes and selective quotations to steer the direction of the succeeding activity.

Pakistan's textbooks present an interesting case of selective visual representation of monuments, leaders, and maps. For instance, the grade 6 book discussing pre-Islamic civilization and empires, has no visual representation of Hindu or Buddhist kings, their forts, art, or architecture. A huge history of several millennia is covered in one single lesson, while the rest of the book only discusses Arabic Muslim rulers and invaders whose history is complemented with pictures, paintings, maps, and tombs. The textbooks offer several "Did You Know" fact boxes, however, some catch more attention. For instance, while discussing Mughal king Babar's success in the battle of Panipat (PK7, p.8), a fact box states: "Do you know Panipat is capital city of an Indian province." An informed reader is left wondering about the inaccuracy of the statement, while an uninformed reader is left wondering *which* province. However, the box seems to indicate the importance of an Indian city that has a history of Babar attached to it.

On a similar subject, on the same page, there is a repeated reference to Hindu/India which is interchangeably used to juxtapose Muslims as a separate entity, both geographically, culturally, and religiously. Babar has been quoted stating that "Indian generals not well versed in

war tactics" …and then again "Babar commented on unorganized army of Indians by saying: 'Indian army knows how to die, but not how to fight' (PK7, p.8-9), and yet again "Indian soldiers lacked the will to fight and discipline" (PK7, p.10). The textbook does not answer "Who is India here?" However, by fusing the past (India that Babar referred to) with the present (India that the textbook refers to), there is a continuity of narrative being constructed that the Indian army *does not know how to* fight, a feature it inherits from its past as witnessed in Pakistan's past. There are no references whatsoever to these quotes, but Babar is quoted again on the same page, in the context of his speech before the battle with Hindu king Rana Sanga:

> A courageous death is better than the life of disgrace and infamy. So it is better that each one of us should consider two options: one, to fight for Allah, and become a ghazi; and second, die while fighting and get the honour of a martyr. These two things guarantee our wellbeing. (PK7, p.10)

Is Babar speaking to the present reader? Is he speaking of Pakistan's past? The quotation is a lesson to be learned from Babar, who, despite "Rana Sanga's over 10 million army" and an "astrologer who predicted defeat of Babar", did not get deterred.

> This address fully revived energies of the army. They all took oath on the Holy Quran to fight till their last breath… Rana Sanga caught escaping and afterwards put to death. (PK7, p.11)

It is implied that invoking the name of "Allah" to become a Ghazi, and an oath on the Holy Quran all won Babar the war against the undisciplined Indian forces, an allusion to exegesis by Pakistan. Note the Pakistan Army's motto is *Iman, Taqwa, Jihad fi Sabilillah* (meaning, "Follower of none but Allah, Fear of Allah, Jihad for Allah"). Moreover, while there is no clarification of who caught the escaping king and killed him, there is an implication that the Indian king was captured and executed by Babar. However, the king was assisted in escaping the battlefield after his defeat and was later poisoned by one of his noblemen. This is one of the

instances of deliberate ambiguity in history textbooks, where readers are permitted (mis)interpretation, in line with the official history.

The textbook has activities, such as, "prepare an album of photos of Muslim Leaders who were mentioned in this chapter" (PK8, p.36). The book is almost silent about non-Muslim leaders, the reader's attention is diverted to what has been already written and displayed in the chapter. Generic pictures and photographs have been abundantly used to express religious-nationalist sentiment, for example, the page discussing the 1965 India-Pakistan war where "Pakistani tanks countering the enemy in the war" has pictures of battle tanks, military, and a fighter plane (PK9, p.48), stating:

> The whole nation united by forgetting its internal differences and fought against the invading enemy with complete discipline…Our young men loaded their bodies with bombs and blocked the enemy tanks. (PK9, p.49)

Similarly, on the page discussing how "India succeeded in its nefarious designs" to separate East Pakistan on December 16, 1971, a "Do you Know" box infused into the text says, "The incident of Army Public School, Peshawar took place on December 16, 2014" (PK9, p.54). The reader is left interpreting (though not guessing) what else, among the two incidents could be common besides the date, the attack on Pakistan, and the sentiment of loss, given that Pakistan's Urdu-language media reportedly alleges "foreign hand" and "Indian involvement" even when Pakistan Taliban claimed responsibility for the incident (Ahmad, 2014).

Since the books have been published under the present Sheikh Hasina government, the use of photographs alongside texts is particularly noticeable in two contexts. The first is a reference to Bangabandhu, his daughter, and present Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, as well as the Awami League, to emphasize the positive role of the party and its leaders in the formation of Bangladesh. The second is in the context of the armed conflict with West Pakistan. For instance, Bangladeshi textbooks for grades 6 to 8 have a cover page with Bangabandhu's image alongside other monuments commemorating the struggles for the nation's identity from East Pakistan to Bangladesh. Every significant leader of the students' movement, language movement, and liberation war has been provided with a picture. The visual history (through photographs, cartoons, caricatures, paintings, etc.) offers a stronger statement about the disparities between East Pakistan and West Pakistan, as a conscious and discriminatory policy of the latter. For instance, the grade 7 textbook, talks about the economic and cultural discrimination of Bengalees in West Pakistan. The same page has a painting titled "a symbolic poster of economic disparity" (p. 13) where a man stands on the map of West Pakistan, milking a cow that grazes in East Pakistan pastures, symbolizing a colonizer-colonized or oppressor-oppressed relationship between the two wings of Pakistan.

Unlike the sanitized history of genocide during the 1971 Liberation War in Pakistani textbooks, Bangladeshi textbooks display pictures of "mass killings" and "hellish genocide" (BG8, p. 20), while the same page offers this activity: "Describe the conspiracy of Pakistan and the preparation of Bengalees in the context of Liberation War". This feature is similar to Indian textbooks, where an activity is presented after providing the official history of an event, thus, aiming at steering the classroom discussion in a predetermined direction. The same textbook, in the context of Bangladesh's liberation on December 16, 1971, has depicted the celebratory event

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with two pictures: one with the freedom fighters rejoicing with weapons, and another titled "signing the Document of Surrender" (p. 36), together with the Activity: "describe the scene of surrender at the Racecourse ground". The text adjacent to the pictures, states:

> The Racecourse ground was overcrowded by the people to observe the scene of surrender. The atmosphere of Dhaka echoed with the sound of 'Joy Bangla'….93 thousand Pakistani soldiers were imprisoned. (BG8, p.36)

The same pictures together with one of Bangabandhu appear in the grade 6 textbook, which begins with the chapter on the history of the Liberation War (GB6, p.1). Similar photographs of "Signing the documents of Surrender" adorn the second page of grade 9-10 textbooks. The same textbook has some "questions for practice" with an imaginary scenario followed by questions from history, the reader is expected to interpret the linkages between the fictitious text and factual questions, for instance (p. 135):

> The people of the village Rasulpur have become used to different types of superstitions and non-Islamic practices due to the lack of consciousness and religiously well-educated persons. A man named Abdullah came forward to inform the superstitious people of this area of the right paths.

A linkage is being implied between superstition and non-Islamic practices, between lack of consciousness and lack of religious (Islamic) education. The textbook takes this stance in several other places as well, such as while discussing the issue of social discrimination, an example of a non-Muslim family is presented (p.59). For example, the Middle Ages Bengal's patriarchy has been explained through the example of Hindu women who were "considered property by their husbands" (p.91), leading to a religion-based reflection on society rather than addressing society as a whole.

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One of the important visual aspects of the three countries' textbooks is the map of their respective countries alongside their neighbors. The striking feature of these maps is the depiction of Kashmir on the maps and the implication for the reader. Indian textbooks display the political map of the country with Jammu & Kashmir as an undisputed territory, and part of India. This is in line with its policy, especially since the 2019 revocation of Article 370 that irrevocably changed the status of Jammu & Kashmir from a state to a Union Territory. Pakistan's textbooks show Jammu & Kashmir in three parts: Pakistan's province of Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan's province of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, and 'India-occupied Jammu & Kashmir' (P10, p.64). Bangladeshi textbooks, on the other hand, show Bangladesh on one side of India, with Jammu & Kashmir as part of Indian territory, but excluding the northern-most area of Aksai-chin (ceded by Pakistan to China) (BG9, p.84).

4.6. Conclusion: Exegesis in Contested histories despite common pasts

The analysis of school textbooks from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh reveals that exegesis has impacted the states' official histories, though in different proportions, leading to different narratives and contested pasts despite shared events. It is clear from the discussion that exegesis-inspired and religious community-specific histories risk being dominant narratives that sideline the representation and voices of minorities or those invisible to the state. Religious exegesis impacted the construction of national identities, i.e., "religion-backed imagined communities" in post-colonial South Asia, which is evident in the history textbooks analyzed. All three nations' textbooks eulogize specific historic figures that represent, define, and guide the nation, making the reader uncritically reverent of them and their affiliated political ideology.

Any other historical personality is either mentioned in passing or discussed in brief without a supplementary visual, leading to the sidelining of any divergent view of the past.

In general, Indian history textbooks cast the net too wide in charting a religious-civilizational history of India with some focus on its intersection with Islamic history, thus revealing too little about the others' histories and other *pasts*. Pakistani textbooks derive their source, inspiration, perspectives of the past, guidelines for the future, and even assumptions about the readers' identity from the state religion; this leaves no space for affiliation or interpretation for a reader that belongs to the minority ethnoreligious community. Bangladeshi textbooks constantly negotiate between the ethnic Bengalee identity and state religion in narrating history, thus, at times revealing more history than their Indian and Pakistani counterparts, while at other times, undermining the readers' agency and feeding a religious view of history.

Hence, much reflective of their present political challenges, while defining the national identities, Indian textbooks draw from religious-civilizational identity derived from Hindu thought, post-colonial secular present, and persistent Gandhian ideals; Pakistani textbooks struggle to debate beyond Islamic identity in conflict with a biased British rule and the Hindu "other"; Bangladeshi textbooks contest the Bengalee (multireligious) and the Bangladeshi Muslim identity as understood by a nation that seeks an identity separate from Hindu India and Muslim Pakistan.

To answer the second research question, the chapter reexamined the school history textbooks from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh through the modification of stances/modes initially proposed by Barton & Levstik (2004): identification stance, analytic stance, moral response stance, and exhibition stance. These stances/modes were transformed into useful tools

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for examining textbooks and revealing *who* is "us", *what* is (official) history, *why* a state did what it did, and, *how* a certain historic event happened and shaped national destiny. Some of these contested pasts among the three nations' textbooks are Pre-Mughal Era, The Mughal Empire, and its decline; The British Empire (including the 1905 Bengal Partition); the 1947 Independence, and the 1971 Bangladesh Independence.

Pakistani textbooks securitize an Urdu-speaking Islamic identity against the constant threat of Hindus and India, which are used interchangeably. While the advent of Islamic invasions in the subcontinent has been described as a consequence of the defeat of weak and undisciplined Hindu armies, British colonization is viewed as anti-Muslim and favoring Hindus with key territories that provide access to contested Kashmir. The subsequent partition is ruled as inevitable, just but incomplete; that is also the view of the books over jihad in Kashmir.

For Indian textbooks, religious diversity is a necessity against Muslim Pakistan's narrow worldview. The emphasis on Gandhian ideals essentializes awareness of a Vedic past, but multi-religious present, leading to the British rule and the partition being termed unnecessary and unjustified. However, Indian textbooks remain silent over post-partition relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh but diverge into differentiating between Indian nationalism and European nationalism.

Bangladeshi textbooks, while addressing traumatic pasts such as the targeted genocide of the Hindu Bengali population by the West Pakistan armies, do not steer clear of exegesis when discussing the partition and Liberation War. Here too, partition was necessary from a Hindu India, and then again from an Urdu-speaking colonizer, but it is an incomplete division of territory that does not include the whole of the Bengali land. While religion alone could not keep united the two wings of Pakistan, religion continues to drive the official history of the state in

textbooks that occasionally equate the lack of Islamic customs to a lack of consciousness. The textbooks of all three states effectively utilize exhibition in the textbooks to silently convey their differences from the neighbors, at times alienating the domestic 'other' who shares more with the 'other' in the neighboring nation.

Designing and revising the curriculum is as political an exercise as elections in South Asia, where both go hand-in-hand with election promises. In light of the above discussion, a look at the most recent education policy documents of the three nations reveals a less probability of a reconciliation of history among the states.

Indian National Education Policy (NEP) (Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020) intends to enhance education in Sanskrit to create a stronger linkage between the future generation and its glorious civilizational past. However, as India continued to grow into a prominent power geopolitically, the revised curriculum aims to "attain this goal of global quality standards, attract greater numbers of international students, and achieve the goal of 'internationalization at home'". While the national education policy alludes to the golden past that saw India as a land of knowledge dissemination and production, the intent is to promote India as a "global study destination providing premium education at affordable costs thereby helping to restore its role as a Vishwa Guru", i.e., strategically placing India on the map as a global powerhouse and a norm-setter.

The National Education Policy (2017) by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Government of Pakistan, emphasizes 'character building' as its first policy goal "on the basis of universal Islamic values integrated with ethical values relevant to all human beings" (p.10). Exegesis dominates the policy document that stresses "Pakistani Nationhood and National Integration" based on the foundations of the ideology of Pakistan,

ideals of Muslim Ummah, making compulsory the study of the Quran and Hadith in relevant schools. The policy document maintains its distinction from the West:

> The secular Western countries or the Marxist-oriented countries always try to incorporate and integrate their ideology in their educational system. In case of Pakistan, national ideology or philosophy of life was enunciated earlier than the demarcation of its geographical boundaries…The only justification for our existence is our commitment to Islam to be adopted in our practical life. Therefore, our Education Policy should focus on Islamic Education and to suggest how to translate the Islamic Ideology into our beliefs, worships and actions in daily life. (Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, 2017)

Bangladesh's National Education Policy, 2010 is among the oldest and least revised.

> [The policy] emphasizes religion, science and technical education…We will be able to build up a golden Bangladesh, free of poverty as was envisioned by our Father of the Nation. We will pay our sacred homage to the sacrifice of lives of our 3 million martyrs, when we celebrate the golden jubilee of our independence in 2021, with our heads high in the committee of nations. (p.3)

There is little divergence from what has already been added in the curriculum, i.e., sections on Bangabandhu's personal life, his struggles as a leader of East Pakistan, his sacrifice for the nation including the achievements of his daughter and present Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina. The education policy only intends to maintain a curriculum centered around the official history of 1971:

> The curriculum and syllabus of all stages of educational levels including primary and secondary will reflect the spirit of liberation war, the context of liberation war, its spirit and factual

narrative, language movement, the existing realities of the country, mother language, literature, culture and history. (Ministry of Education, 2010)

While the analyzed history textbooks do not show awareness of official history on the other side of their borders, exegesis-driven official histories do compete amongst themselves as they draw lessons from specific events in the inaccessible past, omit history that is unsuitable to state identity or state policies and choose their traumas that fit well with the victimization of not just the state but the religion too. Thus, these state narratives, as presented through textbooks, impact how the nations want their future generations to view and understand themselves and their neighborhood. However, from the perspective of furthering regional peace and harmonious co-existence, it is crucial to initiate dialogues on common history with the intent of regional trust-building and the eventual reconciliation of divergent perspectives into a coherent narrative.

Though exegesis, as a state exercise divides, changes, and retells history, it can also be a site for identification (as attempted in the chapter), to understand the forks in history-telling by states. Hence, any reconciliation of the past needs to be preceded by a recognition of differences and acceptance of biases in understanding the self (state). Exegesis can prove to be the empathetic site for identifying fundamental differences between the 'self' and the 'other' and exploring possibilities of dialogue based on exegesis. While different points of focus on shared past need not be conflicting, an altogether conflicting narration of history can undermine regional peace.

Chapter 5
To be or not to be: Examining the different secularism(s) in South Asia

5.1. The Dilemma of ontological security: religious national identities and Secularism

The 1947 partition on religious lines was a regional destabilizer, with the birth of new nations based on different faiths. On the one hand, it led to one of the world's largest population displacements, the partition was also preceded and succeeded by interreligious and ethnic riots, fueled by conflicting faith-based identity clashes. Thus, the destabilizing impacts of partition carried forward into the following decades when the South Asian nations of India and Pakistan dealt with manifold economic, political, and security challenges. However, without a careful examination of the structural factors causing inter-state insecurity, it would be incomplete to conclude the causes for the vulnerabilities and anxieties of the newly crafted modern independent states of India and Pakistan. The state anxieties were caused by a newly gained status of an independent modern democratic state, as well as constant religion-based violence threatening domestic politics and challenging regional/foreign policy. Kinnvall (2004, p. 742) has argued that when "individuals feel vulnerable and experience existential anxiety, it is not uncommon for them to wish to reaffirm a threatened self-identity". An implication of this reaffirmation is the search for the self and eventual redefinition (and possible creation) of the self through a distinct state identity. In the case of India, J.L. Nehru envisioned a secular nation with a Hindu majority population, while M.A. Jinnah's (West and East) Pakistan was declared an

Islamic nation with secular values. Despite religious riots, assumed 'secular' state identities were proposed as a solution to the issue of religion.

The decades following the partition witnessed more bilateral armed conflicts over disputed territories of partition, including the one in 1971, leading to the independence of Bangladesh from West Pakistan. Bangladesh was declared a secular Muslim-majority nation of Bengali people with Bengali language. Once again, this was a point of reconstruction of identities for (West) Pakistan and Bangladesh, as distinct from each other despite the shared history between 1947-1971. However, each of the three states has been facing challenges of interreligious conflicts, and domestic and regional instability partly owing to religious nationalisms and contestation between history, religious identity, and post-independence states' secular visions.

While religious minorities exist in the three nations, their survival and progress are heavily dependent on whether the state identity accommodates their religious/cultural differences, as intended by secularism that aims to keep the state and the 'church' separate. That leads to the question: how has religion impacted the post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh? But also, and more importantly, how do these three states understand, define, and envision their secularisms?

Ontological security has been described as the quintessential (existential) requirement of a unit (individual) to provide stability and continuity of being over a period of time, in order to overcome the uncertainty about self. Giddens (1991, pp. 38–39) defines ontological security as an individual's "fundamental sense of safety in the world" through trust in others, such that obtaining this trust is an essential condition "for a person to maintain a sense of psychological well-being and avoid existential anxiety". Giddens' framework bases ontological security on

routines or habits that ensure a (secure) biographical existence, as well as biographical continuity which includes communication with and recognition of identity by others to ensure the ontological self. For Kinnvall (2004, pp. 741–742), against any insecurity, an individual seeks "reaffirmation of one's self-identity by drawing closer to any collective that is perceived as being able to reduce insecurity and existential anxiety". Mitzen (2006) argues that states can face ontological security dilemmas, beside and distinct from physical security challenges, wherein, "ontological security is security not of the body but of the self, the subjective sense of who one is, which enables and motivates action and choice" (2006, p. 344).

Ontological security indicates that there is something inherently more crucial for states, i.e., their sense of stability and continuity over time which could imply risking physical security to safeguard the existential self or self-identity. When this stable self-identity and the routines associated with it are challenged, it can lead to anxiety and can be interpreted by states as a threat. In other words, when states feel threatened about their sense of self, they can act out of anxiety and display an array of "regressive and seemingly irrational" behavior (Ejdus, 2020, p. 7). While anxiety could be a disabler for an individual and could restrict actions (Krickel-Choi, 2022), it has been discussed in IR as that which "consumes all social agents motivates them to secure their sense of being" or the 'self' of a nation-state (Steele, 2008).

Insecurity can arise from the denial of identity or as McSweeney (1999) notes, from not being recognized or acknowledged by others, leading to an identity crisis. For states, this could translate into situations such as not being accepted as an independent state or being deprived of collective recognition by the international community. The denial of recognition or acknowledgment can cause anxiety or ontological insecurity, leading to states attempting to reestablish self-identity and restore the sense of certainty in inter-state relationships. Other

sources of anxiety can come from the breakdown of institutionalized routines among states that signal a breakdown of trust (Mitzen, 2006) or from transformative phenomenon such as globalization (Kinnvall, 2004) that disrupts existing economic, social, and political systems, while also impacting all levels of a nation from individual to the collective. In the case of the former, states might seek recognition and reciprocate the same by recognizing other states. To overcome destabilizing impacts of globalization, the decision-making elite may resort to past glories and politicize existential security. For Steele (2008), state policies can sometimes be understood as them safeguarding or protecting their honor or pride which are part of the state's self-identity. Any threat to a state's self-identity through an attack on its pride or honor may lead to anxiety and evoke state policies to protect the same.

However, these threats can be generated from within a state engrossed in seeking ontological security, causing the very exercise of reconciliation and peace-seeking, a source of ontological insecurity for those feeling disruptions in routines and threats to identity-based on antagonistic relationships. Rumelili (2015, p. 16) argues that one group's ontological security may cause another group's ontological insecurity through the narratives of the dominant group that either deny or threaten the legitimacy of the minority groups within states.

Thus, in the literature, anxiety can lead to ontological insecurity, caused by any event which disrupts the normal or institutionalized state routines or challenges the collective identity that the state represents. But what causes this anxiety and how it is dealt with, has been discussed through various perspectives in the literature on ontological security in the international relations discipline, leading to different conclusions about prospects of peace and reconciliation. Bringing religion into the discussion further complicates the matter since the complex relationship between religion and ontological security is relatively less discussed in the literature (Andrews et

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al., 2015), while there is less consensus on how to deal with religion in international relations discipline (Chadha, 2022b). The crucial point here is that states that undergo stress and anxiety generated from ontological insecurity may seek ontological security by overcoming uncertainty and engaging in reestablishing routines, prioritizing conflict to resolve a threat to state pride or honor and engaging in identity construction. So for states suffering ontological security crises, religion and nationalism could be employed for identity constructions to overcome uncertainty or anxiety (Kinnvall, 2004). However, how religion impacts ontological security and insecurity is still unclear because there is no consensus on how to deal collectively with the complex issues of ontological insecurity, identity, and religion while also looking at creative history-telling by states and its impact on ontological security-seeking.

The events of the 1947 partition of British India provide insight into opportunities for creative history-telling by states during crucial points of state anxiety/identity crises and search for ontological security. Likewise, the application of ontological security as a national interest of states assists in a reexamination of the aftermaths of the religion-based partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 into Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India, and then again in 1971 as Urdu-speaking Muslim Pakistan and Bengali-speaking Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

The modern democratic states after a long colonial experience, left states with existential anxiety of searching for identities and seeking past roots to narrate a continuous history of the nation that preceded the colonial experience and could connect the past with an envisioned future. As argued by Andrews et al. (2015, p. 144), in the search for a nation, a nationalist narrative must "demonstrate that the nation it wishes to create has always existed". In other words, ontological security as an objective of states requires a connector or an enabler that allows states to perform creative history-telling and identity-creation. This 'connector' can be

found in the concept of *exegesis*, which this dissertation defines as an *interpretation of religion as a historical discourse*. In other words, exegesis is an exercise or a process of reading religion as a civilizational narrative, as a historical discourse, that connects an unobserved past with an envisioned future to create a national narrative and craft state identity. Exegesis, then, as a state exercise has implications for not only official history but also ontological security as well as how post-colonial states dealt with a crucial and presumed indicator of modern states, i.e., secularism.

This chapter applies the above discussion to the South Asian case of post-colonial partition and reveals the possibility of discussing the anxieties and necessity to define and secure the 'self' of newly independent nation-states. Moreover, the concept also opens up the possibility of defining and comparing the differing understanding of secularism(s) in South Asia through the case of Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. The chapter argues that the partitions of South Asia's three most populous nations provided a fertile ground for seeking ontological security through distinct identities, mainly based on religion. The key reason for this was the incomplete process of the establishment of separate modern states mainly, ruptured and marred by religious conflicts. This chapter then presents its second argument, that the modern states 'read' and 'interpreted' religions differently, conducting *distinct exegeses of religions*, which enabled them to carve a distinct national identity for themselves after every crisis of identity and state anxiety. The chapter demonstrates these *distinct exegeses of religions* by how the states (India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) defined and implemented secularism in their constitutions.

The chapter first examines the term secularism and then discusses in detail how the post-colonial experience of modern states in South Asia was a ruptured process: both, caused by religious issues and addressed by *distinct exegeses of religions*, causing the states to be stuck with incomplete secularism, as well as identities of self and the 'other' informed by religion. The

chapter concludes that religion (through exegeses) became the linchpin in South Asian nations to achieving ontological security, as well as an enabler of securitization of the inter-state conflicts defined as religious ones in domestic politics.

5.2. Secularism(s) and Exegesis in British India

The term secularism is being increasingly examined by scholars from different disciplines to uncover the complexity in the term that has been understood as either a binary opposite of "religious" or as the state of being neutral to all religions or sometimes, as a powerful tool to rid the politics of the majority religion. What has emerged is a discussion on secularism(s) or different manifestations of the state's *secularness*, which is intertwined with socio-political developments in different nations. But the roots of the concept can be traced back to centuries of struggle in the Western world to separate religion from interfering in the material affairs of the state, resulting in the Peace of Westphalia (1648). While the church was distanced from 'temporal' affairs of the world, 'secularism' was believed to have achieved the idea of freedom from religion, as well as the resolution of religious-identity-based conflicts among different Christian denominations in Europe. It was the de facto characteristic of (Eurocentric or Western) international relations, coupled with modernization wherein reason would prevail, and religion would retreat to private spaces.

While 'secularism' moved beyond Europe through colonialism, it faced severe challenges in being implemented in colonies with a very different system of beliefs. Additionally, the reception of secularism was different even in the Western world, raising a question on the extent of the presupposed secularist distinction between the church and the state. Casanova (2011) has

recognized modernity as a Western accomplishment based on Judeo-Christian tradition, but his alternative model of 'multiple modernities' recognizes religions at the core of distinct civilizations and argues for the continued relevance of world religions in the emerging global order. Through this argument, he also hints at the possibility of different experiences of secularism in different contexts.

That being said, in several religious states even in modern times, secularism is synonymous with the non-religious—which need not be antagonistic to religion but could be considered such depending on the understanding of how strict the boundaries of religion are[17]. For some faiths, their knowledge systems are plural and allow for distinction between (and assimilation of) the secular, the non-religious, and the anti-religion, whereas in other faiths that consider them interchangeable terms, it is unacceptable or even blasphemous. As Fitzgerald (2010, pp. 118–119) argues, in terms of spheres of influence, if secular means neutrality and separation (but not hostile to religion), then the "nonreligious domain includes the modern nation-state, its judiciary, legislature and executive, and politics, economics, educational system, laws and so on." But he also asks readers to exercise caution because the non-religious domain was only a (more recent) Western seventeenth-century invention of modern science, in the earlier "discourse on religion the secular was a class of priests!", since

> In a world in which the Commonweal had been the dominant metaphor for God's order on earth, the modern nation-state and its written constitution which makes 'religion' a private right was either unthinkable or blasphemous before a particular historical point of paradigm change.
> (Fitzgerald, 2010, p. 118)

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[17] "The unfortunate thing with suppressing religious sentiments is that when it returns, it returns with a lot of vengeance and religion has the power to emotionalize people" (S. Malik, personal communication, November 28, 2022).

In the context of religion, secularism, and IR (generally assumed to be and is dealt with as a secular discipline), scholars have pointed at the difference between secularism and laicism, highlighting the social and historical construction of the differences between the two (Hurd, 2008). Hurd has also argued that European laicism and American secularism have had long-lasting impacts on the conflict between the US and Iran, as well as the European Union-Turkey. However, the study limits itself to the secular practices in the West and their conflict with the Islamic nations. Other scholars have examined the impacts of modernization theory on secularism and argued the existence of two kinds of secularism: passive and assertive (Kuru, 2007).

Contrasting the passive secularism in Christian-majority America with the assertive secularism in both Christian-majority France and Muslim-majority Turkey, Kuru (2007) has argued that assertive secularism is incompatible with any (majority) faith with a significant public presence. He also restricts his discussion to similar cases of European nations, the US and Turkey, to imply possible compatibility between passive secularism in Islamic nations. Additionally, these scholars have taken up only states with Judeo-Christian traditions as case studies, leaving out nations with alternate or more ancient belief systems.

In contrast, studies on constitutional comparisons of secularism such as by Jacobsohn (2003) have proposed different characteristic models of secularism in the US, Israel, and India. In his book *The Wheel of Law*, the constitutional process of incorporation of secularism in India has been contrasted with those in the US and Israel, to argue in favor of state intervention in personal matters of faith. While India's model of secular constitutionalism is termed ameliorative, it is different from Israel's visionary secularism (where the state identifies itself with a particular religion), and the US model of assimilative secularism. However, the form of

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secularism assumed to be capable of dealing with the challenges of constitutional globalization and religion's threats to liberal democracies is more "assertive" than "passive". There is also limited discussion on the possible impacts of colonialism or conflicting religious and civilizational frameworks on the emergence of different secularisms. Secularism, while discussed as being challenged by a state's majority religion, falls short of being placed into the larger context of Christian thought or the Jihadist movements that have been argued to threaten and alter not just constitutional norms and political institutions, but also international order (Phillips, 2011).

Thus, one of the less-researched factors that directly impact secularism (in definition and practice) is "religion", since it is considered that which is opposed by "secularism", and hence it would undermine the concept to be characterized by what it seeks to oppose/resist. However, this section argues that secularism in South Asia is not only constantly interacting with religion, but is largely based on religious ideas of secularism. This implies that colonialism was created through the centuries of its evolution, a new power discourse, at times implying that European powers were far from exercising secular power in their colonies. In fact, religion at the time, was allowed to be the dominant force during and after the end of the colonial period- such as the partition of Bengal during the British Empire and the subsequent partition of British India into Muslim Pakistan and a secular Hindu-majority India.

Another implication is that in the non-West, such as in the Middle East or South Asia, religion never left the realm of politics and has been ever present in identities, policies, and nationalisms. Thus, it is important to first examine the complex relationship between 'religion' and 'secular' in South Asia, to uncover the distinct set of challenges the nations face in their quest for ontological security, reflected in their attempts to achieve their own versions of

secularism(s). Moreover, the complex case of South Asian secularisms, which are constantly evolving, *exegesis*-derived, and at times, unexpectedly resilient, also poses a challenge to the existing collective understanding of secularism in the world.

5.3. Secularisms as an outcome of the decolonization process and religious nationalism

The British dominion over the Indian subcontinent was marked by an initial separation from the land's religious life, to steer clear of native anxiety of the Christian regime which they suspected would compel them to convert, a policy Copland et al. (2012, p. 165) term as religious neutrality or non-involvement despite engaging in administrative tasks concerning religious land, taxes, managing places of worship, or practices. However, education policy under the British created a space for both- Western education as well as preaching by Christian missionaries, mainly owing to the Evangelical belief that anyone willing to repent (through conversion), could be redeemed from the sin (2012, pp. 172–177). In response, there was an increase in religious-communal organizations[18] across the provinces, as well as sectarian violence and riots, which the British were unable to resolve.

European colonization and the aggressive imposition of Western modernity were followed by 1813 Christian missions, both of which showed "aversion to Hinduism, with its idolatrous polytheism and caste system" (Jaffrelot, 1993, pp. 12–14). British reforms included

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[18] Dar-ul-Ulum seminary (Deoband, 1867), Anjuman-i-Islamiyah (Lahore, 1869), Singh Sabhas (Amritsar, 1873), Arya Samaj (1875), Gaurakshini Sabha (1882), Sanatan Dharma Sabha (1895), Chief Khalsa Diwan (1902) are some of the organs listed in (Copland et al., 2012, pp. 186–187). Besides, Indian National Congress (1885), Muslim League (Dhaka, 1906), Hindu Mahasabha (1915) were also formed.

the abolition of Hindu customs, evangelizing, and missionary activities. The Hindu response (mainly from the elite) through organizations such as Arya Samaj was an internal religious reformation, and absorption of Western modernity "while preserving the core of Hindu tradition" (*op. cit.*).

The religious responses to expanding colonial power were also different. The first resistance to the British power in 1857 only succeeded in the consolidation of colonial power, and decimation of the existing Mughal presence (Panhwar, 2019, pp. 4–6). The Indian National Congress (INC) founded in 1885, with leaders like M. Gandhi, sought a collective independence movement in India. The 1905 division of the Bengal presidency into Muslim eastern and Hindu western areas challenged Indian nationalism and INC protested against religion-based division, and engineering of minority religious populations in other provinces as a result. The Muslim elite gathered in Bengal's Dhaka in 1906 to form the Muslim League, which remained mainly elitist till 1937. The anti-colonial nationalism in India also found its base in religious ideology and institutions, despite INC representing itself as the secular voice of all Indians (Veer, 2011, p. 278). Hindu Mahasabha, began rallying for Hindu interests within the Indian National Congress in 1915 (later forming a distinct political party under Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in 1930). Meanwhile, INC, under the ideological leadership of M. Gandhi advocated for Home Rule under the British Empire after World War I, campaigned for a non-violent civil disobedience movement boycotting British rule, and urged Hindus to join the 1920 Khilafat Movement for the Muslim cause. However, the Muslim mobilization for the Caliphate by several Ulemas, sermons and fatwas worsened into anti-Hindu riots (such as Mapilla in 1921), causing a vicious cycle of religious violence, a "sense of inferiority among the majority community", and strengthening of the Hindu Mahasabha as Hindu Sangathan (Jaffrelot, 1993, p. 20). A key ideology was published

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in 1923, developed by V. D. Savarkar who was arrested by the British and imprisoned in Ratnagiri: the Hindutva, which viewed Hindu civilizational identity (of which religion of Hinduism was only a component) as 'vulnerable' compared to other dominating religions (1993, p. 26):

> O Hindus, consolidate and strengthen Hindu nationality; not to give wanton offence to any of our non-Hindu compatriots, in fact to any one in the world but in just and urgent defence of our race and land; to render it impossible for others to betray her or to subject her to unprovoked attack by any of those 'Pan-isms' that are struggling forth from continent to continent…(V. D. Savarkar, 1969, p. 140)

> Mohammedan or Christian communities possess all the essential qualifications of Hindutva but one and all that is that they do not look upon India as their holyland…Their holyland is far off in Arabia and Palestine. Their mythology and Godmen, ideas and heroes are not the children of this soil. Consequently their names and their outlook smack of foreign origin. Their love is divided. (V. D. Savarkar, 1969, p. 113)

The ontological insecurity experienced by British India's elite was clearly different and understood in the framework of exegesis. Muslims felt wronged by the British who decimated the Mughal presence that symbolized Islamic control over parts of India as well as by Hindus who were identified as religious antagonists and beneficiaries of British policies by adopting Western education. Hindus felt threats to their civilizational identity as well as antagonism by Muslims and Christians who were outsiders to the sacred land and were causing a rupture in the continued civilizational biography of the land by dividing it on the basis of religion. The

Muslims sought a solution in separation from the non-Muslims, i.e., Hindus as well as the West represented by the British. The Hindus sought independence from civilizational other, i.e., through the liberation of undivided Indians from the British.

This divergent exegesis-derived understanding of ontological security threat is illustrated by British India's clashing political elite, i.e., when J. L. Nehru declared only two competing forces in 1937 India: British imperialism and Indian nationalism (represented by INC), M. A. Jinnah was quick to point out that "there was a third party to be reckoned with-the Muslims" (Panhwar, 2019, p. 25). After World War II, INC opposed British rule aiming for a united independent India against demands for a separate Muslim Pakistan. Hindu Mahasabha meanwhile, opposed M. Gandhi's non-violent movement, in the face of religious riots between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs. By the 1940s, the Muslim League's demands for a separate homeland for Muslims has become quite strong despite some internal fractures, such as the League's Bengal branch under Abdul Mansur Ahmed arguing briefly in 1944 that Bengal's Muslims were different from Hindus as well as Muslims, seeking independent North East India (Jaffrelot, 2015).

The 1942 Cripps Mission was aimed at the British negotiating with INC (including Gandhi), to accept the Dominion status and elections under the British government after World War II, while offering Muslim League under M.A. Jinnah to opt out of India. As a result, the INC launched the Quit India movement while the Muslim League supported the British war effort. Jalal (1985, p. 59) has noted that Choudhry Khaliquzzaman protested the provision of the aforementioned Cripps Offer in his letter to M. A. Jinnah, stating "Long and hostile distances will intervene against the cultural influences of the minority Provinces on the Pakistan Zone", and that

one of the basic principles lying behind the Pakistan idea is that of keeping hostages in Muslim Provinces as against the Muslims in the Hindu Provinces…If we allow millions of Hindus to go out of our orbit of influence, the security of the Muslims in the minority Provinces will greatly be minimized.

There were several voices in British India seeking the end of colonial rule, some calling for an independent state for Muslims, while others seeking an independent unified India. However, both wished to carry forth (in varying degrees), the Western idea of secularism as a solution for inter-religious conflict. That being said, the secularism(s) being proposed were not only different but also derived from different understandings of religion as well as religious history. The succeeding sections explore these secularism(s) and examine their role in addressing the problem of religion, which served as both: the cause as well as part of the solution to states seeking post-colonial ontological security.

5.4. Examining the exegesis-defined secularism(s)

5.4.1. The case of India

With the 1947 partition seeming inevitable, Indian leaders were dealing with an unreconciled myriad of events over centuries in the subcontinent: the land's civilizational history, Islamic invasions, atrocities, and eventual growth of Sikhism to counter those, British colonialism, and colonial exploitation leading to religious assertion and religious divide in a pluralistic society. The Constitution's Drafting Committee chairman, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had

"cautioned that India was not yet a consolidated and integrated nation but had to become one. This anxiety was also reflected in his speeches in the Constituent Assembly" (S.R. Bommai vs Union Of India, 1994). This anxiety of being a post-colonial state, dealing with a sensitive issue of religion and secularism is also reflected in Dr. Ambedkar's opposition to Professor T.K. Shah's proposal for inclusion of the word 'secular' to reflect the state-religion separation in the Constitution's Preamble. Dr. Ambedkar also opposed the Hindu Code Bill[19]'s applicability to all communities stating that "It [secular State] does not mean that we can abolish religion…All that a secular State means is that this Parliament shall not be competent to impose any particular religion upon the rest of the people…That is the only limitation that the Constitution recognizes" (Moon, 2020, p. 883).

Indian Constitution was officially adopted in 1950 on the foundation of India envisioned as a secular state[20], but it was only years later during a state of emergency, that the word 'secular' was added alongside 'socialist' by India's then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru. It was after its addition to the Preamble in 1976, that 'secularism' has been seen as a necessary condition for Indian pluralism, and also as a divisive tactic of policymakers towards appeasement politics of certain religions. In the Indian context, secularism is translated as *panthnirpekshta*, i.e., neutrality among different religions as well as among different sects of the same religion (mentioned in the Constitution of India, the Preamble's Hindi version). This partly derives from the Indian understanding of the difference between the Dharmic religions (an

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[19] Hindu Code Bills referred to a set of laws for reformation and codification of personal laws for Hindus in India and were heavily debated in the Indian Parliament in the 1950s.
[20] The 1950 Constitution was a product of years of debate including aspects of state, religion, and their relationship, embodying Swami Vivekananda's idea of religion and ethics: "Religion is the idea which is raising the brute unto man and man unto God...Any religion that can bring that about, is the true religion for humanity...Mankind should be taught that religions are but varied expressions of the Religion which is The Oneness so that each may choose the path which suits him best" and "In India religion was never shackled. No man was ever challenged in the selection of his Ista Devata (Deity of one's choice) or his Sect, or his Preceptor and religion grew as it grew nowhere else" (Atheist Society of India v Govt of Andhra Pradesh, 1992, p. 310)

umbrella of Indic religions that mainly constitute Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism) and the Abrahamic religion divided into several sects. However, secularism in practice has been understood as *sarva dharma samabhava* (expressing the possibility and prosperity of all religions leading to the same destination or attainment). It implies the peaceful coexistence of different religions or faiths that are equidistant to the state that lets all religions/faiths prosper. The Supreme Court of India had noted in 1954 that while the 1950 Constitution did not define 'religion', the application of the American definition (Davis v. Beason 133 U.S. 333, 1890) was imprecise and inadequate for the Indian context, stating that:

> Religion is certainly a matter of faith with individuals or communities and it is not necessarily theistic…A religion undoubtedly has its basis in a system of beliefs or doctrines which are regarded by those who profess that religion as conducive to their spiritual well being, but it would not be correct to say that religion is nothing else, but a doctrine or belief. (1954 AIR 282, 1954 SCR 1005)

The Supreme Court had also noted in 1994 that after J. L. Nehru, Dr. Ambedkar, and other national leaders had strived to maintain the secular nature of the Constitution[21] and Dr. Ambedkar was:

> …careful while drafting the Constitution to ensure that adequate safeguards were provided in the Constitution to protect the secular character of the country and to keep divisive forces in check so that the interests of religious, linguistic, and ethnic groups were not prejudiced. He carefully

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[21] Copland et al. (2012) have stated that despite S. Radhakrishnan's view of the Constitution draft being in accordance with India's religious traditions, it also reflected British provisions that sought government action in safeguarding minority rights while also maintaining state neutrality for religions (2012, pp. 228–229).

weaved Gandhiji's concept of secularism and democracy into the constitutional fabric. (S.R. Bommai vs Union Of India, 1994)

The implication is that, unlike the strict church/state separation, interreligious tolerance and peaceful coexistence have been identified as constitutional values. Thus, secularism in India has been imagined as an "essential condition for religious freedom" (Chaney & Sahoo, 2020, p. 193). Bhargava (1998) has argued that the initial formulation of Indian secularism was incited by the urgency to resolve the ensuing 'Hindu-Muslim problem' including riots, displacement, and religious strife. This was also the basis of the 1947 partition wherein, Pakistan was created through M.A. Jinnah's (representing the Muslim League) Two-Nation theory that employed the Islamic idea of Muslims not accepting being ruled over by non-Muslims, and the fear that being a minority in a non-Muslim nation would strip them of their rights and privileges. The only solution, argued by M.A. Jinnah (Pakistan's first governor-general) and accepted by J.L. Nehru (independent India's first Prime Minister), was a separate Islamic state for the Muslims of India.

However, a large Muslim population remained in the post-Partition India, creating the basis for intense interreligious conflict, and secularism was imagined as the solution to resolve this issue through the following means: "(i) a strong defense of minority rights, to be supplemented, on the one hand, by (ii) deploying the resources of religious tolerance to isolate bigotry and encourage internal reform and, on the other hand, by (iii) consolidating whatever space of the common good already exists" (Bhargava, 1998, p. 542).

Nevertheless, Nehru and his vision of secularism have been criticized for conceding to Muslim League and its demand for dividing India on communal lines. Analyzing Nehru's secular politics at the time of 1947, Madan (1998) has argued that "It is perhaps one of the tragedies of the twentieth century that a man [Nehru] who had at the beginning of his political career wanted

above all to bridge religious differences should have in the end contributed to widening them" (Madan, 1998, pp. 301–302). It is also peculiar how despite partition violence on both sides of the border and communal hostility, Nehru continued to emphasize his idea of a secular nation-state by empowering the judiciary and accusing the Hindu Mahasabha and its members despite their key role alongside others in the independence struggle. In order to maintain a non-communal stance of the Congress party, he equated communalism with being anti-national, and declared that "a committee member of the Congress could not simultaneously be a member of the committee of a communal organization such as the Hindu Mahasabha or the RSS". (Tambiah, 1998, p. 426).

Nehru was not the only one promoting secularism for an independent India. M.K Gandhi's understanding of the same is often contrasted with Nehru's to bring out the ideological difference between the two, which later created a rift between them during and after India's partition on religious lines. But to understand either, scholars have pointed out a key flaw in the way secularism was introduced in the former colonies by tracing secularism to its roots in the dialectic of modern science and Protestantism in Europe. Madan (1987) has argued that such models of modernization "prescribe the transfer of secularism to other societies without regard for the character of their religious traditions". For him, being secular is 'marginalizing' religion, which in turn distorts faith into fundamentalism.

In South Asia, i.e., the Indian subcontinent, if secularism cannot function with religion, it cannot intend to resolve religious conflict. Thus, Nehru's secularism was about state neutrality towards religions and an ideology of minority modernists in the nation, while Gandhian secularism was a state's responsibility to allow religious faiths to co-exist and flourish in a society where religions were the source of values. While Nehru considered it a state obligation to

eliminate any religious politics, Gandhi held the view that the state needed to be separated from "the patronage or support of temple, church, and other institutions of worship" (Tambiah, 1998, p. 439).

Another issue concurrent with secularism was the necessity of a uniform civil code for all citizens of India, regardless of their religion since the British empire had allowed the existence of different religious laws such as the Muslim Law to govern the personal laws of religious communities. Where the Muslim League had been considering upholding the Sharia Law, Congress' political elite was divided over the issue of a uniform civil code during the drafting of the Constitution. Nehru and his aides were convinced that a uniform civil code was a necessary condition for a secular state, the Muslim leadership in India contended that personal law could only be governed by the tents of Islam, and a state could not pass legislation on the same. For some, the word of the Qur'an was absolute and unchangeable, while others doubted if the Muslim population would agree to the idea of a common personal law alongside other religions. As a result, uniform civil code remained a 'directive principle' in the Indian Constitution's Article 44 (originally Article 35 of the Draft Constitution) wherein "the state shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India" (Tambiah, 1998, p. 429).

It has been argued that a secular state cannot encroach on the rights of the majority religion by legislating their personal law either. The case in point has been the Hindu Code Bill, during the 1940-1950s that has been taken up by Indian lawmakers in the absence of an institutionalized Hindu organization since "Hindus remained an exceedingly heterogeneous community whose boundaries this legislation was unable to define and authorize" (Chatterjee, 1995). The absence of such interference by the state in matters of legislation for other religious

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communities such as Muslims, Christians, etc. is seen as a violation of the "practice of non-preference of the secular state" (Ibid.).

In 1985, the Shah Bano case, when a divorced Muslim woman filed a case for maintenance money, was considered by their opponents as evidence of the Indian National Congress (INC) abandoning secularism and opting for a biased outlook towards religions (Copland et al., 2012, p. 235). The judicial bench ruled that Muslims "were subject to the maintenance provisions" in accordance with Indian Law and even Islamic Law (under the Islamic concept of *mehr*), Islamic clerics opposed the judiciary's aptitude in interpreting Muslim law and objected to any step towards intersection or homogenization of personal law in the nation. The then Prime Minister leading the INC passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act 1986 to reverse the decision of the judiciary in the case and treat Muslims as a special community outside the purview of the law for the rest of the citizens[22] (Tambiah, 1998, p. 420). The decision was welcomed by the Muslim clerics and *mullahs* for maintaining the primacy of Muslim personal law, but opposed vehemently by the *Sangh Parivar* as INC's favoritism towards Muslims representing India's second largest religious community, and also challenged by women's organizations as a regressive decision undermining women's rights (Tambiah, 1998, pp. 430–431). Indian politics at present, continues to deal with religious animosity in the absence of the uniform civil code, as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) continued to push for it in its 2019 election manifesto (p. 37), now calling it necessary for gender equality and the rights of women.

Galanter (1998) has expressed doubt over Indian secularism's outcome of empowering the judiciary to regulate and reform Hinduism, while not being able to interpret religious texts of

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[22] The new law held the husband accountable for paying *mehr* only during three months after divorce, whereafter, her family, relatives, or Wakf Boards would be responsible for the same

other faiths. Hinduism's distinct feature has been that while the king followed the religion, "his duty was not to enforce some universal Hindu standards upon all, but to lend his support to the self-regulation of a multiplicity of groups with diverse standards" (Galanter, 1998b, p. 237). However, that has also been considered its weakness in establishing patterns of interdependence and leaving little vent for possible separation of state and religion, in light of being an unorganized religion. In such a scenario, a judiciary that interprets and rules in religious cases often draws a picture of Hinduism based on Western or Western-inspired scholarly sources (Galanter, 1998a, p. 287). Secondly, scholars have argued that Indian secularism has long assumed that "unification and organization of Hinduism will somehow contribute to national integration" and thus needs state intervention, although this assumption not only undermines the religion's ability to tolerate and accept diversity of faiths and pluralism but also risks the state intervention being more partial and localized (Galanter, 1998a, p. 289).

Bhargava (1998) has expressed his reservations and has argued that the Indian state has strayed from its neutrality principle several times when "it carried out a series of reforms within Hinduism, but left orthodox Islam intact", moving from contextual secularism (state intervention for substantive values) to hyper-substantive secularism[23].

> The dominant justification of the policies and practices of the Indian state was done by appealing to contextual secularism of the principled distance variety: exclude religion for some purposes and include it to achieve other objectives, but always out of non-sectarian considerations… All

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[23] India secularism in practice has also been questioned through Article 30(1) of the Constitution that provides special rights to minorities to manage and run their educational institutions, despite the state claiming religious neutrality. On the other hand, the religious minorities express the necessity of this provision under the fundamental right of religion, which includes freedom to practice and propagate one's religion.

in all, a great deal of degeneration; the Indian state has increasingly lost sight of its objectives and acted more and more on a sectarian basis. (Bhargava, 1998, p. 520)

In light of severe religious tension in the nation and challenges to secularism, a political puzzle has been why India did not succumb to communal pressures and establish a state religion like most other South Asian nations. Smith (1963, pp. 26–27) has argued that it is the resilience of Indian religion itself, wherein Hinduism's tolerant conduct towards other religions, its lack of organization, and a philosophical tradition that does not necessitate centralization and institutionalization through a religious state, are all factors that supported Indian democracy. On the other hand, Hinduism's "incapacity for large-scale organization which makes it dependent upon the state to effect reforms, thus impacting the nature of Indian secularism" (Galanter, 1998b, p. 236).

There has been an emergence of new trends with the electoral victory of the BJP in 2014, wherein the nation's Hindu community has identified itself with a larger movement to assert its civilizational-religious identity, creating further challenges for Indian secularism. The Hindu nationalists have argued for the need to save their civilizational and religious community from consistent persecution during Islamic invasions, the British era, and even after partition in its neighboring countries. The stated reason is that minority religious communities have faced religious discrimination and have drastically reduced in numbers in neighboring Islamic nations of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (Dixit, 2021).

One such example is the Citizenship Amendment Act (Bill) (modifying the Citizenship Act of 1955) to provide a faster acquisition of Indian citizenship to any persecuted religious minorities of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from South Asian nations of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan (who had arrived in India before 31 December 2014 on

grounds of protection from religious persecution in the Muslim nations). The Bill led to widespread protests by the Muslim community claiming discrimination, and evolving into communal riots in the capital, once again bringing to the fore the Hindu-Muslim issue that the founding fathers had set to resolve.

India experienced an ontological anxiety as a post-colonial state, where its secular character found space in its civilizational plurality. Thus, 'religion' received a broader civilizational definition by judicial interpretation, leading to 'secularism' being subject to interpretation as well: distinct from the Western implication of strict state-religion separation, accommodating both religion and non-religion, but also offering a level-playing field to all religions. The secular state, nevertheless, lawfully intervenes in religion in the name of social reformation, while religion seems to have made fluid the definition of secularism which it continues to contest.

5.4.2. *The case of Pakistan (East & West Pakistan till 1971; Pakistan since 1971)*

The origin of present-day Pakistan is loosely attributed to M.A Jinnah's Two-nation theory, however, it can be traced back to several figures such as Jinnah's close associate and poet-politician Mohammad Iqbal seeking separate Muslim-majority province, as well as the idea of "Pakstan"[24] in early decades of the twentieth century. It also finds roots in the Muslim separatist ideas of the last decades of the nineteenth century, mainly among the foreign-educated Muslim elite of British India and from the Muslim-minority provinces such as Bihar, Gujarat,

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[24] Pakstan, an acronym for separate homeland for Muslims of India comprising federal states of the Punjab, Afghania (the North-West Frontier Province or NWFP); Kashmir; Sindh; and Baluchistan has been attributed to (in print) a four-page leaflet *Now or Never: Are we to live or perish forever?* by a Cambridge University Muslim student Chaudhri Rahmat Ali in January 1933 (Panhwar, 2019, p. 22). Ironically, most of these represented (erstwhile unenthusiastic) Muslim-majority provinces, but not those provinces from wherein demands for separate homeland had emerged.

Bombay, Uttar Pradesh, New Delhi (Malik, 2011). Muslim-majority provinces such as Punjab, NWFP (North West Frontier Province), and to a lesser degree, Sindh were unthreatened by the transfer of power by the British and not enthusiastic about Pakistan (Burki, 2008, p. 6 as in Malik, 2011). Nevertheless, the movement for Pakistan did emerge despite pockets of indifference in Muslim-majority provinces, or efforts towards uniting Muslims and non-Muslims under M. Gandhi's leadership through the Non-cooperation movement and Khilafat movement.

> Jinnah and other Western-educated Muslims…feared that a religious focus would ultimately divide Muslims and Hindus. He favored a secular political leadership, called the movement unconstitutional, and resigned from the Congress Party in protest. (Wynbrandt, 2009, p. 143)

The Khilafat movement and Non-cooperation movement, could not survive long after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and also eventually fell victim to strong demands for a separate land for British India's Muslims under M.A. Jinnah's Muslim League. Thus, the formation of Pakistan emerged from a complex fusion of disagreements over religion-defined separate electorates in British India, to secure Muslim interests defined by the Muslim League, assertions by Muslim nationalists for a separate homeland, and concerns for the future of Muslims and Islam in Hindu-majority British. Thus, the assertion of Muslims' political identity, can be argued, was both a cause for partition as well as an expression of (ontological) identity threats felt by the Muslim political elite in INC's united India with its civilizational symbols alluding to pre-Islamic civilization.

It has been argued that Muslim political identity was based on three propositions: Muslims as a nation, Muslims as disadvantaged or less favored by the British, and Muslims (*Musalmans*) as minorities of British India (Young, 1976, p. 295). It is notable that on the last

point, M.A. Jinnah contested the idea that Muslims were a minority in British India in his 1940

address, stating:

> It has been taken for granted mistakenly, that the Musalmans are a minority…The Musalmans are
>
> not a minority. The Musalmans are a nation by any definition…We find that even according to
>
> the British map of India, we occupy large parts of this country where the Musalmans are in a
>
> majority-- such as Bengal, Punjab, N.W.F.P, Sind, and Baluchistan. (Jinnah quoted in Chitkara,
>
> 1998, p. 529)

For the first proposition on Muslims as a nation, it is interesting that in the same 1940

speech, M.A. Jinnah provided his reasons for the Muslim League's two-nation theory

enumerating how he saw fundamental differences between Hindus and Muslims which his Hindu

friends (INC) 'failed' to understand:

> It is extremely difficult to appreciate why our Hindu friends fail to understand the real nature of
>
> Islam and Hinduism…It is a dream that the Hindus and Muslims can evolve a common
>
> nationality, and this misconception of one Indian nation has gone far beyond the limits…The
>
> Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, and
>
> literature…they belong to two different civilizations which are based on conflicting ideas and
>
> conceptions. (Chitkara, 1998, p. 532)

While a secularist Muslim leadership instrumentalized Pakistan's establishment as the region's first Islamic Republic and a homeland for Muslims where they could freely follow their religion and practices, it is unclear to what extent it was envisioned as a secular state, and whether M.A. Jinnah's secularist vision could iron out the glaring religious differences he himself had been emphasizing. A violent partition was followed by an exodus of millions across borders such as Muslims who migrated from India to Pakistan, or Hindus and Sikhs who migrated to India amid communal riots.

Studies have examined the population census data from 1931 and 1951 and concluded that between 1947-1951, 14.5 million people migrated into India, East Pakistan, and West Pakistan, while 17.9 million people had been displaced overall in these territories pointing to an abysmal figure of 3.4 million missing people as a result of the 1947 partition (Bharadwaj et al., 2008). Of the total missing or unaccounted persons, approximately 2.2 million people went missing along the Punjab border between India-Pakistan represented by an equal estimated number of religious groups comprising Hindus and Sikhs on one hand, and Muslims on the other. Another study by K. Hill et al. (2008) analyzed census data from India (1931, 1941, 1951) and Pakistan (1951) to calculate a figure of 2.3 to 3.2 million missing persons due to deaths or unrecorded migration, causing a 'religious homogenization' at the district level in Punjab

> Populations from different religious communities that had lived side by side in the Punjab for centuries were suddenly placed in situations where few or none of their new neighbours were members of a different religious community…that gave rise to this loss of traditional diversity, are still affecting those living in the Punjab and elsewhere, and Pakistan and India are still dealing with the political, social, and cultural consequences. (K. Hill et al., 2008, p. 169)

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However, Pakistan was envisioned as a secular Muslim nation. In his 1947 Presidential Address to the Constituent Assembly, M.A. Jinnah stated his vision:

> You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or to any other place of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed – that has nothing to do with the business of the State...The Roman Catholics and the Protestants persecuted each other…Thank God, we are not starting in those days… you will find that in the course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus, and Muslims would cease to be Muslims, not in the religious sense, because that is the personal faith of each individual, but in the political sense as citizens of the State. (Haq, 2019, p. 47)

Pakistan's 1949 Objectives Resolution submitted by Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan (and influenced by the Muslim religious scholars (*ulama*) and Jamaat-e-Islami) to the Constituent Assembly uniquely emphasized: the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance, and social justice as articulated by Islam, and, Muslims (individually and collectively) were guaranteed the right to order their lives in line with the teachings and imperatives of Islam as in the Holy Quran and the Sunnah (Jaffrelot, 2015). The Ordinance Resolution also seemed to capture the vision of Pakistan and hence formed the basis for the Preamble to Pakistan's several Constitutions henceforth. But the document did not define 'Muslim' or what was to be meant by an Islamic Pakistan. In fact, there were competing visions of Islamic Pakistan, leading to constitutional consequences for not just secularism and religious minorities, but also divisions within the majority religion. Qureshi (1979, p. 20) noted the different positions on what constitutes Muslim identity among the secular and non-secular leadership. For instance,

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Mohammad Iqbal "was deeply concerned with the religious solidarity of Muslims and hence condemned Qadianism[25] as a divisive element on the issue of the finality of Mohammad's prophethood". The exegesis of divine texts drove a wedge between Pakistan's Sunni majority and Ahmadis[26], besides the former's disagreements with Shias and their shunning of non-Muslims such as Hindu or Sikh minorities as *kafirs* (non-believers), as reflected in the subsequent Constitutions since 1956. While Pakistan falls short of being a theocracy, Hamdani (2022) has argued that with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on 23 March 1956, it replaced the secular constitution of the Government of India Act 1935 and moved closer to a theocracy. Ahmar (2012) argued that M.A. Jinnah ensured that the state would not be theocratic, but his demise in 1948 turned it into a monolithic religious state.

The 1956 Constitution was abrogated in 1958 during the military Coup, after which a new 1962 Constitution was approved to empower the President while abolishing the powers of the Prime Minister, and also institutionalizing military engagement in politics through positions of the President or the Minister of Defense being reserved for army rank-holders[27]. The 1973 Constitution came after the 1971 Bangladesh War of Independence which had greatly damaged the military's position in Pakistan's politics after a huge loss of territory. But more than that, the 1971 War was a threat to Pakistan's identity as an Islamic nation that could not prevent partition

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[25] Qadiani, Quadiani or Mirzai is the reference to Ahmadi Muslims in Pakistan's Constitution, a community that can only find a place for itself in Muslim society if it accepts the orthodox and governmental definition of itself as non-Muslim (Gualtieri, 1989, p. 14).

[26] Giving an example of Ahmadi's view of Christ, Gualtieri (1989, pp. 18–21) elaborates on how it contradicts both Sunni Muslims and Christians: Mirza Ghulam Ahmadi (founder of Ahmadi sect) declared himself to be the Promised Messiah (with Jesus-like qualities), but subordinate to Muhammad, is at odds with Sunni interpretation of Quranic history and the Word of God where Muhammad alone bore God's definitive revelation; Ahmadis' idea that Jesus died a natural death in old age and was entombed in Kashmir contradicts a fundamental Christian theological tenet that God atoned for the sin and reconciled the world to himself when Jesus died on the cross.

[27] "The large role of the military in Pakistan's political system, territorial disputes (especially the Kashmir problem), are some of the main challenges for Pakistan that directly impact South Asian security" (EXP-1, personal communication, December 29, 2022).

under military rule. The 1973 Constitution reinstated Pakistan's parliamentary democracy as well as restored the executive powers of the Prime Minister. But on the religious front, the laws were to conform to the rulings and sanctions in the Quran and Sunnah, in line with the nation's identity as an Islamic republic. For the first time with effect from March 19, 1985, there was a Constitutional definition of what was a Muslim and non-Muslim[28]:

> (a) "Muslim" means a person who believes in the unity and oneness of Almighty Allah, in the absolute and unqualified finality of the Prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the last of the prophets, and does not believe in, or recognize as a prophet or religious reformer, any person who claimed or claims to be a prophet, in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever, after Muhammad (peace be upon him); and
>
> (b) "non-Muslim" means a person who is not a Muslim and includes a person belonging to the Christian, Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, or Parsi community, a person of the Quadiani Group or the Lahori Group who call themselves 'Ahmadis' or by any other name or a Bahai, and a person belonging to any of the Scheduled Castes. (The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, Art. 260)

For Pakistan's secularism in law, it is absent in words but for the same in practice, the fundamental rights list three articles for religious freedom: Article 20 Freedom to profess religion and to manage religious institutions (but subject to law, public order, and morality), Article 21 Safeguard against taxation for purposes of any particular religion, and Article 22

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[28] The 1974 reference also alienated Ahmadis and non-Muslims (Inserted by Constitution (Second Amendment) Act, 1974 (49 of 1974), Section 2 (with effect from September 17, 1974)): "A person who does not believe in the absolute and unqualified finality of The Prophethood of MUHAMMAD (Peace be upon him), the last of the Prophets or claims to be a Prophet, in any sense of the word or of any description whatsoever, after MUHAMMAD (Peace be upon him), or recognizes such a claimant as a Prophet or religious reformer, is not a Muslim for the purposes of the Constitution or law" (The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, Art. 260)

Safeguards as to educational institutions in respect of religion, etc. (The Constitution of Pakistan, 1973). However, there are competing provisions that challenge the position of religious minorities as equal citizens, such as Article 31 which makes it a state's responsibility to promote the Islamic way of life, or Article 41(2) which restricts the election to positions of power as the President to Muslim citizens only (Nakhoda & Uzmi, n.d.).

The 1973 Constitution was held in abeyance in the 1977 military Coup, then restored in 1985 followed by several amendments mainly transferring powers between Prime Minister to President and back as recently as 2010. However important measures were taken under General Zia Ul Haq's presidency (1977-1988) that cemented the Constitution's Islamic conformity. Pakistan's civil and criminal laws were brought in line with Shari'a law, including Shari'a benches under the Federal Shari'a Court to ensure trials conforming to Islamic law, or the introduction of corporal punishments (such as hanging, amputations, etc.) for crimes such as alcohol consumption, theft, adultery, etc. in violation of Shari'a law. The blasphemy laws were also introduced during this time (1982 and 1986) that discriminated against non-Muslim minorities as well as women[29]. The abduction, exploitation and forced conversions[30] of Hindu, Sikh, and Christian girls have been stoking anxieties among Pakistan's religious minorities, and their exodus to India (Ilyas, 2015; Jaffrelot, 2015).

In Pakistan, which is an Islamic republic unlike Bangladesh, Islam shapes political discourse. As was seen in the 2014 election it was important to be *Sadiq* and *Ameen* (truthful and trustworthy)[31]

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[29] Bhargava (2011, p. 112, Note 17) has titled the Hudood ordinance (1979) an antiwomen policy wherein "rape convictions require four male witnesses", a failure of which would result in "prosecution of the complainant, who is liable for punishment for fornication (*zina*)".

[30] The Government of United Kingdom in December 2022, sanctioned Mian Abdul Haq, a Pakistani Muslim cleric and earlier National Assembly member of Pakistan People's Party (PPP), "responsible for forced conversions and marriages of girls and women from religious minorities" (Government of United Kingdom, 2022)

[31] In Pakistan's Constitution, Article 62(1)(f) necessitates a person to be *Sadiq* and *Ameen* (truthful and trustworthy) to qualify as national or provincial legislature member.

to contest the election. Several radical groups have come up in Pakistan politics like Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, that are now contesting elections...Blasphemy law and attitude towards Ahmadiyya [Muslims] shape political discourse (S. S. Pattanaik, personal communication, November 22, 2022).

Malik (2011) has debated that all Pakistani leadership, in one way or the other, used Islam to legitimize their authority while suppressing their opponents. Ahmar (2012) has opined that Pakistan's transition from being 'relatively tolerant' to unstable, is due to political clashes, militancy, and violence. The state's continued relationship with Islam has also witnessed degrees of change (Jaffrelot, 2015). However, despite differences between the policymaking elite, their adherence to Islam, and their tactics, the overall impact on state secularism has been negative. What draws attention is that Islam was the defining principle, and the fulcrum of its distinct national identity, wherein a distinct exegesis of the religion allows for law that (partly) conforms to Shari'a law, references to the Prophet and Islam, imposition of 'Islamic' symbols (religion, language, conduct, etc. based on religious interpretations and ideas) and more importantly, disproportionate empowerment of religious majority by 'othering' of the non-Muslims (the latter aligns with the Muslim League's justification for a Muslim state due to civilizational differences). While having a state religion need not be a particular hindrance in ensuring equal rights to religious minorities, Pakistan's 'secularists' have engaged in policymaking that on one hand instrumentalized religion to achieve political objectives, however, they too operated within the confines of Pakistani exegesis of Islam, did not strive to curb religious discrimination (of non-Muslims or even self-proclaimed Muslims like Ahmadis) to the detriment of democracy, domestic security, and even international responses. The political environment, thus, has become

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even less conducive to a revival of discussion on secularism in the Constitution, i.e., possibilities of its inclusion in letter or spirit.

5.4.3.   *The case of Bangladesh*

Despite the promise of a homeland for Muslims in 1947, East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) was in a constant struggle for its identity- initially as part of Pakistan and distinct from India, where religion played a crucial role. The 1969 resignation of Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan's takeover of (East and West) Pakistan as the army chief was preceded by years of unrest, military dictatorship, curbing democratic setup and institutions, and particularly, exploitation of East Pakistan. The 1970 elections saw the decisive victory of the Awami League and hope for a confederal system to grant autonomy to East Pakistan (Jaffrelot, 2015), which was eventually rejected by West Pakistan, including Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP). This was followed by a civil war, the Pakistan Army's operation to hunt down Bengali separatists, violence, and the eventual liberation of Bangladesh in 1971 assisted by the Indian military that argued for measures to curtail the refugee crisis in India from East Pakistan. Thus, Bangladesh reconstructed its distinct identity based on a lack of consensus on defining ethnic, religious, and linguistic communities with West Pakistan through the 1971 War of Independence, as it initially sought to establish a secular nation owing to its diverse ethnoreligious population. The imposition of Urdu as the state language in Bengali-speaking East Pakistan is cited as a crucial factor in the division of Pakistan in 1971. However, it was not a mere language issue, but rather an extension of narrow religious readings of what constituted Pakistan's identity, as Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan had affirmed:

Pakistan has been created because of the demand of a hundred million Muslims in this sub-

continent…Pakistan is a Muslim state, and it must have its lingua franca, a language of the

Muslim nation…and that language can only be Urdu and no other language. (Ayres, 2009, p. 43)

M.A. Jinnah's Dhaka University speech in 1948 is a case in point:

The state language, therefore, must obviously be Urdu, a language that has been nurtured by a

hundred million Muslims of this subcontinent, a language understood throughout the length and

breadth of Pakistan and, above all, a language which, more than any other provincial language,

embodies the best that is in Islamic culture and Muslim tradition and is nearest to the languages

used in other Islamic countries... There was no justification for agitation but it did not suit their

purpose to admit this. Their sole object in exploiting this controversy is to create a split among

the Muslims of this state, as indeed they have made no secret of their efforts to incite hatred

against non-Bengali Mussulmans. (Ziring, 1971, p. 115)

The role of religion is often undermined in the backdrop of East Pakistan separating from

West Pakistan as evidence of the failure of Jinnah's "two nation theory". However, a careful

examination of the above excerpt highlights several factors driving East and West Pakistan unity

in M.A. Jinnah's Pakistan. Firstly, a 'hundred million Muslims' were assumed to be a

homogeneous Urdu-speaking population in West Pakistani imaginaries, although, the 1951

census of Pakistan revealed only 3 percent of the population claimed Urdu while 56 percent

claimed Bengali as their first language (Ayres, 2009, pp. 43–44).

Secondly, only Urdu seemed to qualify as a Muslim language because of its affinity to

Islamic cultures and Muslim tradition despite being the language of a small minority (including

Indian Muslim immigrants or *muhajir*), implying that Bengali with its Sanskrit roots and spoken also by Hindu Bengalis as well did not represent Muslim tradition but was rather 'un-Islamic' by virtue of its script and vocabulary (Ayres, 2009, p. 44).

Thirdly, by accusing 'them' referring to conspirators undermining Pakistan's unity, non-Muslims had been declared conspirators by virtue of their religion for previously stoking discord among 'non-Bengali Mussulmans' apart from the state of India that was an identified enemy.

Finally, with their narrow definitions of state identity and its constituents, West Pakistan's leadership was undermining ethnoreligious diversity in East Pakistan based on a narrow exegesis of Islam.

In the context of Bangladeshi secularism, it is also crucial to examine the conflict between the idea of a secular Bangladesh, against its historical realities drenched in the genocide of minority religious communities even during the Liberation War in 1971. East Pakistan's Hindu population was targeted for war crimes by the West Pakistan army alongside pro-Pakistan forces within Bangladesh (Rummel, 1994; R. N. P. Singh, 2004). The fact that the liberation efforts would not have been successful without the military support from India did not alter the anti-Hindu sentiment in Bangladesh's domestic political parties, wherein religion, especially animosity towards pan-Hindu communities has been ever present (Rummel, 1994). Yasmin (2013) has raised the identity dilemma regarding Bangladesh as a "country of secular Bengalis or Muslim Bangladeshis".

For Bangladesh's first Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rehman (and his ruling party Awami League), independent Bangladesh was constitutionally secular. *Dharma Nirapekshata*[32] (the state of being unconcerned or neutral towards religions) was established as a pillar in the original Constitution while seeking to eliminate communalism (Article 12), and banning Islamic political parties (Article 38), for supporting Pakistani forces during the 1971 war. Although the Constitution did not guarantee anti-Islamic legislation, Mujibur shared his thoughts in his speech to his party on secularism in January 1974, "The people of my Bangladesh are religious and God-fearing. They can be misled more easily in the name of religion than by any other means." (O'Connell, 1976, p. 69).

However, secularism was perceived as non-religiousness (and more empowerment to Hindus) by Bangladesh's Muslims who opposed it through the slogan *Joy Bangla joy-heen, Lungi chere dhuti pin* meaning Awami League's *Joy Bangla* (victory to Bangladesh) slogan had been rendered meaningless in the independent nation, "because of the adoption of secularism, the historical "*lungi*" donned by Bengali Muslim men would be substituted with "*dhuti*", which was the traditional dress of Hindu men" (J. H. Bhuiyan, 2017, p. 206; Yasmin, 2013). While it has been argued that secularism was devised as a tool to oppose communalism in Bangladesh (J. H. Bhuiyan, 2017, pp. 207–208), its vehement opposition by people and religious groups for having the ability to alter religious symbols and traditions, reflects the misconception surrounding the term as well as its constitutional intent in the Muslim-majority nations. In nations with religion-defined secularism, the former's ability to hold secularism hostage was evident when Jamaat-e-

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[32] O'Connell (1976, p. 65) has noted that even though the Constitution was first written in English by lawyers "trained in British legal tradition" mentioning the word "secularism", it is still considered an authorized English translation to the one written in Bengali that mentions *Dharma Nirapekshata*.

Islami[33] Bangladesh (the country's largest Islamic political party) combined the anti-India propaganda with Islam-under-threat rhetoric ironically in Muslim majority Bangladesh. As noted by Pattanaik (2009, p. 275)

> "…prominent members of Jamaat who stayed in Pakistan after Bangladesh's liberation, had taken an international tour to generate public opinion against the secular regime of the Awami League…[propagating] that all the mosques in Bangladesh were destroyed by Indian soldiers and the current government was an India agent. Jamaat tried to create sympathy for itself internationally by raising the 'Islam is in danger' slogan. The pressure paid politically. Mujib, to establish his credentials that he is not against religion, tried to renegotiate secularism with overt religious symbolism."

However, the Awami League under leaders like Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, was not dealing with religious symbolism for the first time. When General Yahya Khan declared his Legal Framework Order (LFO) subordinating democratic processes like elections to Islamic ideology and in full adherence to the principles of Islam, the Awami League readily accepted the same. The partition violence that had ensued since 1947, too, had continued in the name of religion with non-Muslims migrating to India. The 1971 independence war offered a new disillusionment with the Islamic identity assertion, wherein "war-time atrocities in the name of Islam" propelled the move towards secularism (Nair, 2022). Bangladesh's secularism, as

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[33] The party is now known as Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami, elaborated its objective 'to achieve the pleasure of Allah and salvation in the life hereafter by making ceaseless effort for establishing Islamic social order in Bangladesh' (Pattanaik, 2009, p. 274). Though the part has been instrumental in charting the course of political Islam, it has suffered immensely in recent decade for failing to restructure to Bangladesh's new political realities (Islam, 2021).

defined, was not antagonistic to religion, and neither necessitated the state's separation from religion but sought religious harmony. In fact, Bangladeshi secularism as envisioned by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was articulated at the 1973 Non-Aligned Summit in Algiers, in his conversation with Muammar Gaddafi:

> Our secularism is not against religion. Our secularism stands for harmony among members of all religions. Indeed, in the opening of the Koran, Allah is described as Rabbul Alameen, the Lord of all creation and not of Rabbul-Muslimin, the Lord only of Muslims. This is the spirit which underlines our secularism. (Nair, 2022)

The next year, in 1974, Bangladesh joined the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Bangladesh's stint with secularism was short-lived as orthodox Islamic parties created an increasingly visible political presence and the Awami League's leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was assassinated in a military coup in 1975. Major-General Ziaur Rahman rose to power and established the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and started the Islamization of Bangladesh, beginning with some changes to the Constitutional value of secularism. In 1976, the ban on religious political parties was annulled and then, "Secularism" was replaced with "Absolute Trust and Faith in the Almighty Allah", "*Bismillah-Ar-Rahman-Ar-Rahim*" in the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful) was added to the Preamble in 1977 through a Constitutional amendment.

The provisions under Article 25's amendment pushed Bangladesh towards the promotion and maintenance of "fraternal relations among Muslim countries based on Islamic solidarity" (J. H. Bhuiyan, 2017, p. 210). Subsequently, Islam was instated as a state religion in 1988 through another constitutional amendment (*Ibid.*) by General Zia's successor, General Hussein

Muhammad Ershad, who could not be opposed by his own members of parliament since they were constitutionally bounded by Article 70 from voting against their own party. The 1975-1990 era of the military regime's successful establishment of Islam as a state religion, political discourse, and basis for education in Bangladesh was complemented by state-sponsored media's religious programs focusing on Islamic values and customs (Wohab, 2021). It is argued that Bangladesh during this time received massive infrastructure development aid from Middle Eastern Muslim nations besides legitimacy for the non-democratic form of government. Islamic identity was imposed and propagated through General Ershad's closeness with "orthodox Islamic believers and Deobandi madrasas" as Sufi mystic preaching Islam engaged actively in religio-political organizations and movements like the Farazi movement based on "puritan ideals of Islam" (Wohab, 2021, pp. 7–8).

Even after the restoration of democracy in 1991, Bangladesh's politics continued to remain practically distant from secularism due to the rising influence of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami and key political parties of AL and BNP trailing the Jamaat for collaboration despite their clearly distinct ideologies and views regarding secularism. The main challenge for Bangladesh in recent years has been managing the clash between Islamists and the minority religions in the country, causing a change in the very form of secularism that was aspired for in the nation. Rahman (2020, p. 27) has argued that the "inference that the state religion clause under the constitution of Bangladesh is beyond the purview of accommodating state religion under political secularism", which is considered the basis of the Constitution's Article 12.

The contradictory presence of a state religion as well as 'secularism' in the Constitution had stoked anxiety among targeted religious minorities in Bangladesh, but the 2016 ruling of Bangladesh's High Court demonstrates the nation's constant struggle to commit to secularism

above state religion. The petition seeking the elimination of a constitutional provision stating

Islam as the official religion of the state was rejected by the court ruling that the Committee

against Autocracy and Communalism (petitioning organization) 'did not have the right to be

heard in the court' (Bergman, 2016). M. J. H. Bhuiyan (2021) has argued that Awami League

has adopted a state religion to satisfy the nations' Muslim-majority as well as religious groups.

However, a careful examination of Bangladesh in recent decades points to the continuity of the

state seeking an identity in its religious past while only allowing the constitutional presence of

Bangladeshi secularism, lest the latter be cast aside for being an existential threat to Islam.

> Since the Partition, religion played a big, perhaps, the most decisive role in impacting relations
> among India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. A secular Bangladesh was created by dividing Pakistan,
> but Islam remains a big part of its identity and still plays a role in shaping its ties with Hindu
> majority India. The religious violence targeting Hindus in Pakistan and Bangladesh also
> significantly determines India's relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh. (EXP-4, personal
> communication, January 22, 2023).

So long as secularism stays subordinate to the state religion, and the definition of

secularism stays contested, the nation's leadership would continue to prioritize avoiding

communal violence, over fundamentally resolving the religious tension, or committing to

secularism in letter and spirit. O'Connell (1976) had expressed hope in Bangladesh's attempt

towards preserving secularism stating that with the global humanitarian assistance and proximity

to India as a "possible champion of the minorities" (1976, p. 77), the probability of Bangladesh

orchestrating or overlooking any violence or harassment of religious minorities is low. However, the present geopolitical scenario of South Asia has posed a challenge to this idea.

5.5. South Asian secularism(s): a comparative analysis

> Religion is invariably part and parcel of politics in South Asia. However, the way in which it manifests in public policy varies across the region... trying to understand or critique South Asian politics using a secular framework created by Western thinkers will only amount to supporting the orientalist views of the region (A. Ramesh, personal communication, November 23, 2022).

As political parties in South Asia are rapidly going back to religion to challenge the legitimacy of existing tenets of secularisms in their nations as a detriment towards religion, the likelihood of a riot or religious conflict becoming cross-border is even higher and capable of dragging more regional powers into the conflict. The threat to regional stability appears to have been mitigated over the decades, but religion-governed secularisms are a loophole for the democratic setups in these nations dealing with conflicting religious identities and histories.

Hurd (2012a, p. 955) stated that secularism "appropriates religion: defining, shaping and even transforming it", taking secularism from its Western roots, and promoting a church-state division. The case of South Asia indicates the possibility of reversing this argument, i.e., religion, too, can appropriate secularism, and redefine, reshape, and give it an alternate form that speaks only to a specific domain of domestic politics. It derives from a process or the quest of a post-colonial state (that draws heavily from religion to define itself), to achieve ontological

security through redefinition of nation, nationalism as well as secularism within the confines of religion.

Unlike what has been pointed out by scholars, secularism need not be a completed process of a modern state in order to face resistance from people who "begin to feel that their society is being cleansed of religion and ideas of transcendence -- the political status of secularism changes" (Nandy, 1997, p. 157). A disruption in the process of establishing secularism as a crucial limb of the modern state can cause enough anxiety and uncertainty for states to seek ontological security besides traditional physical security.

In the case of South Asia, the end of colonialism and transcendence to a modern independent democratic state were a cause of state anxiety, which made it imperative for nations to search for a historical continuity provided by religion, and difficult for states to shed their religious identities in exchange for a more secular society. Thus, the status of secularism underwent a process, from being an imagined necessary condition for the modern state to being redefined in religious terms (through *exegesis*), and in turn, enabled *exegesis* to participate politically in defining and dominating national identities.

> South Asia is not only a post-colonial region but also a post-partition region. The partition was done based on religion and the national identity of Pakistan is closely linked with religion, in Bangladesh, it is about language nationalism, but religious issues too dominate. For India, the entire question of secularism is very significant but over the years, there are critical debate on the subject. So, while there are other factors, like terrorism, non-conventional security issues, role of extra-regional powers are relevant, religious identity is the foremost thing (D. Tripathi, personal communication, November 21, 2022).

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Comparing the secularism(s) in South Asia presents a very interesting picture of three states that were imagined secular, in line with the Western idea of secularism (i.e., separating state from religion), but have witnessed religion appropriating secularism to present a distinct and religion-sensitive definition of the term (Table 6).

Table 6: Comparing the Secularism(s) in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

	India	Pakistan	Bangladesh
Secular state imagined	Yes	Yes	Yes
State religion	-	Islam	Islam
Religious nationalisms	Yes	Yes	Yes
Secularism in theory	Unbiasedness of state for all denominations of religions	Freedom to practice religion, but the subordination of other religions under Islam	Neutrality for religions for state
Secularism in practice	UNEQUAL Emphasis on pluralism	ABSENT Lack of policies toward pluralism	NON-NEUTRAL Efforts toward the promotion of pluralism
Challenges of secularism	Hindu conceptions; Common personal law	Islamic identity of the state. God as sovereign	Maintaining secularity dispute State religion
Domestic opposition to secularism	Tool for appeasement of religious minorities	Religious minorities persecuted under Islamic laws in Constitution	Incompatible with the state religion
Recent issues	CAA (refugees), Minority protests	Persecution of religious minorities, Sub-nationalism	Persecution of religious minorities

Source: Prepared by the author.

For India, secularism draws from the civilizational value of accommodating all religions and the philosophy of equal possibility for all religions to achieve higher consciousness. Bangladeshi secularism came in light of separation from West Pakistan in 1971 and holds neutrality for all religions but holds Islam as the state religion, which contradicts even theoretically the idea of secularism, which struggles to hold its place in the Muslim-majority

nation. At the state level, there is an emphasis on pluralism in both India and Bangladesh.

Pakistan represents an anomaly in the region, where despite the existence of religious minorities

in 1947, has singly highlighted its militaristic Islamic identity, often at the detriment of its

religious-ethnic minorities whose persecution has gone unchallenged, sometimes even by law.

With a steep fall in the numbers of religious minorities in present-day Pakistan, there is

negligible political interests or military commitment (by institutions such as the Pakistan Army)

to find a place for secularism in the constitution that holds the State, the people, and even

principles of democracy, equality, freedom, social justice, etc. subordinate to its exegesis of

Islam[34].

> Since the formation of India and Pakistan was made on the Two-nation theory where religion was
>
> the base to define their nationalities, religion plays an important role in India and Pakistan…in
>
> recent times, the secularism of Bangladesh is challenged both in practice and constitution. Thus,
>
> it would not be wrong to say that religion is an important component of South Asian politics.
>
> Again, the politics of South Asia (particularly India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh) has a huge impact
>
> on security. Thus, religion (or religious extremism) has a huge impact on the security of South
>
> Asia as well as on India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh (P. Jaiswal, personal communication, October
>
> 26, 2022).

In the context of the discussion in previous sections, it is clear that secularism in the

South Asian nations of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh is largely based on respective *exegesis,*

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[34] Pakistan's Preamble to the Constitution, 1973 states "Whereas sovereignty over the entire Universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone, and the authority to be exercised by the people of Pakistan within the limits prescribed by Him is a sacred trust; And whereas it is the will of the people of Pakistan to establish an order: …Wherein the principles of democracy, freedom, equality, tolerance and social justice, as enunciated by Islam, shall be fully observed"

i.e., secularism is mainly defined and propelled by religion. A major reason has been that while the nations were imagined to be secular, the religions have continued to dictate the history and identities in these nations, leading to distinct forms of secularism(s), that negotiate with degrees of people's collective identities for their constitutional relevance. Unlike the assumption of the modernization theory, religion never left the political or public space in these nations, and in fact, governed the scope and form of secularism in the nation's political spheres, indicating a ruptured (incomplete) process of establishment of a modern state. Consequently, the secularism(s) in these nations does not aspire to inch closer to Western secularism but rather function to secure more political power for certain religions.

India, which does not have a state religion, has empowered its judiciary to interfere in the majority religion's reformation through its unique constitutionally defined secularism. Pakistan places Islam above the constitution and God as the sovereign, thus, providing more space for Islamic political parties to capture and dictate the extent of religious tolerance. On the other hand, conflicting tenets of Bangladeshi nationalism defined by Muslim identity versus the secular Bengali nationalism in Bangladesh are reflective of the nation's struggles to keep up the value of secularism that has been added and removed from the constitution more frequently than other Islamic nations. Secularism, in such a scenario, needs to constantly negotiate its relevance as a tenet of modernity in states that seek ontological security through *exegesis*-inspired national identities that transform national territories into sacred geographies. For instance, some scholars have called Bangladesh a model for other Muslim nations that must not "push too much the agenda of secularism" but be satiated with a small amount of it – indicating the existence of incompatibility between secular values and Islam in part of the world which scholars have hinted at succinctly (Khondker, 2010, pp. 200–201).

5.6. Conclusion: secularism(s) as a solution to religion?

The relative degrees of secularism as a constitutional value and as a practice in South Asian politics depend on four main factors- the compatibility of the idea of modernity with religion, how one religion views other religions in an accommodative or antagonistic way, the specific interpretation of secular values by states and the process of establishing of secular ideals by a state. While the decolonization process in South Asia meant greater autonomy for the region towards modernization and economic development, secular principles were imposed in independent India and Pakistan by the political elite despite religious animosity and widespread riots, rather than organically letting it emerge through social consensus. Islam in the subcontinent ended up dividing the population into Muslims and others, conversion to Christianity was propagated through missionary activities during the colonial era, and the Indic religions continued to maintain affinity among themselves while engaging in conflict with Islam and Christianity.

This chapter demonstrated the dilemmas of addressing ontological insecurities through the establishment of independent sovereign states (by division of British India), that:

i) gained biographical continuity and coherence of self-identity through the establishment of either state religion (East Pakistan and West Pakistan) or by emphasizing civilizational identity (India); ii) maintained routinized inter-state rivalries with another state as part of self-identity based on exegesis (such as by antagonizing Hindu-majority India as an existentially crucial enemy of the state as well as of the religion, according to Pakistan's exegesis of Islam); but iii) could continue to suffer ontological insecurity internally among religious communities conducting different exegeses of religion and history, leading to association with different

identity symbols, with potential escalation into separatist movements and the eventual partition of nations (as by eventual partition of Pakistan and Bangladesh in 1971).

The same factor, i.e., exegesis as an exercise conducted by ontological security-seeking states, can cause ontological insecurity too, as seen in how South Asian states struggle to maintain stability internally and regionally among conflicting exegesis-backed identities and exegesis-defined secularisms. Overall, religion continued to govern private and public spheres even after the partition of the British Empire. Secularism was thus viewed as either incompatible with the majority religion (with Islam, in the case of Pakistan and Bangladesh) or interpreted as a tool to appease religious minorities by Hindus in India, where the inclusion of secularism in the constitution propelled the judiciary towards reformation of Hinduism.

There were several "imagined communities" existing within national boundaries with distinct cultural and religious memory and diverging historical narratives that continued to stoke domestic as well as cross-border conflict. Secularism suffered crises of varying degrees in all three nations- Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan but for very different reasons. In Pakistan secularism remains subordinate to Islam and lacks political backing, in Bangladesh secularism has a clearly defined objective of opposing communalism but has seen diminishing political commitment, and in India secularism remains a consistent constitutional value but is undergoing a transformation as opposing political forces continue to strive for a 'just' secularism that does not target particular religions.

However, viewed collectively, one of the common factors for persistent conflict in South Asia is the presence of exegesis-defined secularisms and the lack of a formal process before and after constitutionalizing of "Secularism" in letter and spirit by the leadership. The concept remains unwanted in several parts of the three nations where conflicting memories and histories

are constructed on the foundation of conflicting religions. Secularism, which could have been a probable solution to this complex problem by offering an alternative to religious-based politics, itself became a victim of the constraining religious understandings of the term. Distorted secularism, thus, continues to threaten regional peace in South Asian nations as much as narrow religious worldviews.

In the wider South Asian context, the state needs to remain distant from religions in order to be truly secular, implying that a state must strive to maintain and encourage pluralism in the context of religion, it must not succumb to the declaration of "state religions" or endorsement of a particular faith. Any attempt at achieving a balanced secularism and conflict resolution in the region would need to be preceded by introspection by the political elite including religious groups, who formalize peace-building processes through acknowledgment of common (and not divergent) history, and acceptance of the failed project of religion-based "imagined communities".

Overall, the events leading up to the 1947 partition laid fertile ground for the existential crisis of new states that sought ontological security through nationalism, and distinct identities, mainly based on exegesis. Instead of resolving the problem of religion through secularism, there emerged distinct secularism(s) that enabled exegesis to further fuel ontological insecurity.

Chapter 6

Physical borders, Religious territories: Case of South Asia

6.1. Religion in Re-imagined South Asia

In 1947, British India was divided along religious lines into secular India and Muslim Pakistan, which also included the division of Bengal province into the West Bengal (Indian state) and Muslim-majority Eastern Bengal (East Pakistan). The Nehru-led Indian National Congress (INC) rallied for Hindu-Muslim unity under MK Gandhi and opposed Jinnah-led Muslim League's "two-nation theory" that demanded a separate homeland for Muslims refusing to be ruled by Hindus. Although leaders like Mawlana Mawdudi (who founded the Jamaat-e-Islami in 1941) did not support the partition, they reasoned not for Hindu-Muslim unity but argued for Muslims being the only legitimate inheritors of the land of India, where Adam had set foot, according to their theological beliefs, and for Islamization of the (Western/colonial) laws. However, both Muslim League and its opposers, argued that there could be no reconciliation between their religion and the 'other'[35]. The objective was partially achieved by the establishment of Pakistan, where the Muslim League and even its opposers found their new home, and so did Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan as it separated from Jamaat-e-Islami in India.

A massive population exchange occurred when the Muslim population migrated into the world's first Islamic republic of Pakistan, while several non-Muslims in the newly defined

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[35] Pagden (2008) has compared pre-and post-independence ideologies of the leaders of the Muslim nations and argued that "Like Mawlana Mawdudi, the modern "jihadists" believe that jihad against both infidels and their apostate Muslim accomplices is the duty of every true believer. There can be no reconciliation between the Muslim world and the West, Christian or secular, only the absorption, as the Prophet foretold, of the one by the other. All Islamic militants and radicals hold broadly similar views." (Pagden, 2008, p. 524)

Pakistan, left for India, fearing persecution even as some decided to stay behind over the promise of the secular nature of religion-defined territories. As religious riots and violence ensued, the India-Pakistan rivalry was sealed with religious and ideological differences at the dawn of 1947 (Kleiner, 2007). It further marked a new era of the region's political instability as the two nations engaged in a war over Kashmir, mainly due to its Muslim population being ruled over by a Hindu king who had acceded to India by signing the instrument of accession. The rivalry had turned territorial and militaristic. Domestically, Pakistan, which was envisioned as a secular democratic state, slipped into military rule defined by Islamic authoritarianism and persecution of its religious minorities. India, on the other hand, experimented with democracy and secularism as a way to cope with its majority Hindu and significant Muslim population. Both nations had initiated working with their constitutions to assert their distinct national identities. While New Delhi aimed at securitizing its borders by emboldening the Constitution with its secular nature (though, only included in the Constitution 25 years after independence), Islamabad had begun dismantling its Constitution and revising it to increasingly securitize Muslim identity, Urdu language and reducing anything else as a mark of a second-class citizen with lesser rights in the country.

This religious animosity, within and beyond political borders spilled over into Eastern Bengal (East Pakistan), as Pakistan's imposition of the Urdu language (spoken by few people in East Pakistan) was opposed by the Bengali-speaking people who took deep pride in their distinct culture and Muslim practices. Operation Searchlight in Eastern Bengal, a religion-tinted oppressive military strategy by Pakistan's armed forces unleashed one of the largest offensives carried out against citizens by its own government to curb the separatist movement in the area that demanded the right to language and culture and led to a death toll of 3 million people

(Chadha, 2021). Jamaat-e-Islami played a key role in assisting the West Pakistan government as Bengali Hindus were targeted by the armed forces and an exodus of migrant Hindus sought shelter in India (The Guardian, 2013; The Tribune, 2013). 1971 marked another war between India and Pakistan, where the former armed and supported Eastern Bengal in its independence movement to become modern-day Bangladesh. As Dhaka established a secular Muslim-majority nation, it increasingly fell to religion-based politics declaring Islam as a state religion under military dictatorship, and persecuting Hindus and other religious minorities. It would take decades until 2013 for the government of Bangladesh to declare Jamaat-e-Islami leaders as war criminals for their assistance to Pakistan forces in 1971 (The Guardian, 2013). South Asia's challenges were manifold – securing the borders of nations crafted out of a subcontinent that had centuries of shared histories, accommodating an influx of (religious) cross-border refugees, and managing increasing mistrust and suspicion among religious communities.

While religion seems to have played a role in establishing the new communities and territories of South Asia after colonial rule, it has proved that religious divisions to solve religious problems were a failed colonial policy. However, religion has kept itself in the limelight in South Asia's policies, despite being considered regionally a hoodwinking strategy to conceal other 'rational' objectives of the states. That is partly because traditional international relations are assumed to be secular, where nations seek to maximize national interests. However, religion has continued to persist and at times, underscore how South Asian nations interact with each other and pursue regional politics. Religion, then, is an obscure aspect of politics that becomes difficult to capture, wherever it exists, and yet needs to be explored.

6.2. Religion in foreign policy: key conceptualizations

The scholarship on religion and international affairs has proposed several ways of analyzing religion and how it is operationalized in foreign policy. Jeffery Haynes postulates that the channel for religion in foreign policy opens through religious actors seeking the influence and attention of state leaders (Haynes, 2008). He employs analysis of religious soft power in the Indian, American, and Iranian foreign policy to argue that religious actors and foreign policy actors when they share religious beliefs, the religious soft power is exercised in international affairs. Haynes (2008) argues for an expansion of the term soft power to include non-state (cultural and religious) actors. He assumes that domestic soft power could translate into international hard power (Haynes, 2008, p. 144), by providing examples from the US human-rights-focused foreign policy under Presidents Reagan, Clinton, and Bush, whose push for 'American values' was coupled with the international acts to defend 'good over evil'. Religious soft power thus was exercised as a subset of defending global human rights to achieve dual objectives of allying within domestic groups: religious (US Jews and Christian organizations) and secular (university student bodies and secular human rights organizations) (Haynes, 2008, p. 151).

Another important observation made in the article's notes concerns the definition of the term religion. Haynes (2008) refers to Marty (2000, pp. 7–11) who compares seventeen definitions of religion to conclude that 'scholars will never agree on the definition of religion' while expressing the possibility of describing religion as:

1) a body of ideas and outlooks, such as theology and ethical code; 2) a type of formal organisation, such as, an ecclesiastical 'church', and 3) a social group, such as faith-based organisations. Religion affects the world in two basic ways: by what it says and what id [*sic*] does. The former relates to doctrine or theology, while the latter relates to religion's importance as a social phenomenon and mark of identity, which manifests in various modes of institutionalisation.

Theoretically, the major drawback of this method of defining religion is the inherent assumption that all religions are organized and work through a 'church'. Moreover, describing the link between religion and the world through "what it is" and "what it does" only explains the relationship to the extent of the philosophical or ideological contributions of religion, as well as its visible manifestations in society. What are the implications of religion in world affairs, i.e., the impacts of what it (religion) does, are largely left out of the analysis and conversation, even though the impacts might define how religion deals with the policy outcomes. The article's analysis is less clear in establishing a clear difference between foreign policy objectives and religious objectives in the cases of India and Iran[36].

The other questions left unanswered are, if religion does have a salient role in foreign policy, does it manifest only when non-state actors actively influence foreign policymakers? Secondly, because of the aforementioned impossibility of precisely pointing out where and how

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[36] The article states about the analysis of Indian foreign policy "It is not clear, however, whether BJP foreign policy goals focused on values or instead on specific 'objective' goals that favored Indian national interests." (Haynes, 2008, p. 155). Regarding Iran's case study he states, "It is possible that Iran's efforts to encourage closer ties with Shi'ites in Iraq is not particularly 'religious', as it also makes sense from a secular and strategic point of view." (Haynes, 2008, p. 160), implying that commonality of religion between Iran and Iraq points to the probability of achieving maximum foreign policy gains, but how that could be or could have been done, is left unclear.

religious soft power intervened the foreign policy, it is also unclear then, how foreign policy outcomes would have been different, if not for the influence of non-state religious actors.

Warner & Walker (2011) base their theoretical discussion on a survey of religion in major positivist North American IR theories (realism, liberalism, constructivism, and institutionalism) to argue that religion's influence on foreign policy can be conceptualized into two main systems: domestic (represented by ideas, interests, institutions) and foreign (represented by power, interests, institutions). Each of these systems has sub-systems comprising agents (of a state) situated in a regional system of states (represented by power). The theoretical discussion seeks to offer a narrow as well as a broad investigation of the interaction between religion and system, where religion is represented as religious heritage which is a component of the larger category of ideas and culture. The study asserts the feasibility of observing broader secular trends in "the interactions inside states, between states, or among other large social systems within a region, such as alliances, transnational organizations, or regional institutions" (Warner & Walker, 2011, p. 128).

The religious power in this model is exercised both- through the structure (ideational or material), as well as agents. But the model does not establish a defined and directed relationship between agents and structures, i.e., the model does not answer questions such as, do agents also impact religion (represented by ideas and culture), and can the external system also impact internal/domestic ideas and culture? Secondly, by attempting to combine all major IR theories, the model is too vast and generates very little in terms of studying foreign policy outcomes. Rather, it explains well the proposed relationship between religious power as it mediates foreign policy.

The model works even without religion since it is assumed to be a component of culture and ideas, but assuming the dominant existence of religion domestically, it does not throw light on the causes of domestic conflict based on conflicting religions or agents with conflicting ideas. The model does not state if international relations remain secular, or if not, then which religion (ideational factors) dictate the power in the external system. Lastly, by introducing Power as one of the key nodes of external systems, the model assumes conflicting ideas marked by conflicting religions, leaving little space for studying cooperative aspects of employing religion in foreign policy in the complex model. This creates space for an easy-to-comprehend framework that explains the relationship between faith and international affairs.

Elizabeth Shakman Hurd argues that the "two faces of faith" thesis appears to offer a simplified yet structured path of inquiry into this relationship for foreign policy actors as well as academics (Hurd, 2012a). Employing the example of the United States and its efforts towards military and foreign aid engagement with religion in developing nations to support development and security initiatives, while also seeking to 'restore and reform' religion. The basic premise is that there exist two faces of religion- one which is tolerant and moderate, while the other which is absolute, conflicting, and dogmatic to the extent that it cannot be compatible with political liberalism (Hurd, 2012a, p. 952). In effect, the two-faced faith is either fundamentalist or not, implies a substitution for the preceding but similar conundrum between religion versus secular thesis, because both tend to be biased by a certain understanding of what religion is and end up containing religion which they seek to regulate. These categorizations are at best oversimplifications of a far more complex issue of an uncharted territory of religion which constantly interferes with and even wields power in politics.

Moreover, a missing coherent definition of religion (or faith) further mystifies what a foreign policy actor refers to, or what are the points of reference for strategic thinking when religion is being talked about or is operationalized in international affairs. As Hurd (2015, pp. 258–260) highlights that the assumption that academic experts or foreign policy actors know "what religion is, where it is located, who speaks in its name, and how to incorporate 'it' into foreign policy and international public policy decision matrices" in a way leads to assuming that religion is a stable, isolatable category that exists separately from law, culture, politics, etc.

Rees (2015, pp. 48–49) describes the 'two faces of faith' or the 'peace/danger framework' as easy to comprehend but a misrepresentation of religious actors' work and interests. He proposes a 'four religions' framework to analyze the four different mechanisms that can be used as "'policy optics' by foreign policymakers trying to understand the political culture of states and regions where their foreign policy interests are located" (Rees, 2015, p. 49) mainly through the case study of Egypt. The four religions framework describes four (largely volatile or dynamic) relations between secular and religious spheres as follows:

a. dynamic of collision – formal separation, defined by the subordination of the religious sphere by state sovereignty

b. dynamic of collusion – a combination of secular and religious spheres towards a political culture, where religion is part of the expression and community building

c. dynamic of coercion – muscular secularism repressing or expelling religion from the public sphere towards rapid modernization (modern roots in communist contexts)

d. dynamic of co-option – establishment of concepts, institutions, and laws on a particular religious idea towards the achievement of national or cultural unity (represented by the Islamic world)

The 'four religion' framework, allows foreign policymakers to "understand the landscape of power where religion readily resides before deciding how to prioritize religious interests in the foreign policy process" (Rees, 2015, p. 52). The framework lifts the religion-secularism debate out of false binaries and explains the political transitions in Egypt and the interaction of domestic politics with religion. However, it provides little in terms of the operationalization of religion in foreign policy. The framework can rather be understood to provide a foundation or a precursor to foreign policy thinking, by providing a clearer picture of domestic dynamics. Thus, this framework also does not go further to discuss foreign policy outcomes with the inclusion of religion.

One of the common discussions among the discussed studies is the relationship between religion and power. For Foucault (1978), power can be both a dominating negative force and a positive force creating desires, and in terms of religion, religious discourses, and religious practices create subjectivities. Extending the idea, religion, and politics may appear to be distinct, but could both wield power, where they need not be mutually exclusive or opposites, but interactive and reinforcing each other (Firth, 1981). Bandak (2018, pp. 5–6) employs the analysis of the religion-politics relationship to map the relationship between the two at different points in culture/history, and arrives at four such complex interactions:

a. religion as politics: political use of religion to analyze which religion can be used to forge a certain alliance or conduct mass persuasion

b. religion in politics: religion employed for purposes like political identity, but largely politics states secularized religious sentiments

c. religion out of politics: the othering of religion, such as in the secularization thesis, where religion gets marginalized

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d. religion not politics: remove even the legitimate space for religion accompanied by depoliticization of religiosity as part of a constant ontological differentiation of religious and secular

While this approach presents a neater and clearer interaction between religion and politics, it does not imply the consequences of any of the above religion-politics relationships on either domestic politics or international politics. It represents a categorization of religion-politics interaction while keeping away from trapping them into a binary relationship governed by the secularism thesis. At the same time, just like Warner & Walker (2011), it opens up the scope for discussing the complex relationship between religion, culture, and identities.

Ozkan (2021) explores the relationship between religion/culture in politics to argue that as regional and global actors, states have their unique behavioral patterns defined by their unique historical religious/cultural elements that create a distinct Strategic Mentality (SM). The study argues that it is through this SM that religious/cultural elements impact foreign policy decisions directly and indirectly. SM is different from strategic culture in that strategic culture is an "ideational milieu which limits behavioral choices" (Johnston, 1995, p. 46) impacted by historical experiences, and is one of the variables that affect strategic choices.

For Ozkan (2021, p. 4) SM, on the other hand, is "the way of using and utilizing those cultural elements in foreign policy formulations, not the elements per se" implying that "SM refers to a deeper element that controls what we see on the surface and re-interpret them for the needs of the time." He puts history/culture/civilization in the same bracket and states that since unique historical/cultural/civilizational experiences create a specific SM, categorization of these religious-civilizational modern states can explain their strategic behavior.

One result of this argument is that the work states "Islam and Christianity arguably are imperial religions" when compared to Hinduism or Buddhism which have "regional worldviews" (Ozkan, 2021, p. 7). Hence, despite its international economic power, "India could not be considered more than having a regional vision due to its religiously shaped political vision" (*Ibid.*). The lacuna in this analysis is that it ends up signifying religion as the detriment and does not account for interactions between different cultural or religious elements that form the SM. The analysis also risks being synchronic and does not explain a change in foreign policy. Further, the study asserts that unless there is a change in "political vision in future", the SM and hence policy decision would not change but does not explain how or what could bring about this change in a largely unchanging SM if the religious and cultural factors are fixed and given for a particular state. Also, this approach provides a new way of looking at culture in foreign policy but does not explain the outcomes of the foreign policy decisions, and their impacts on state policy, if states are in a dynamic system.

Thus, religion and foreign policy have been linked together in very simplistic models as argued by Hurd (2012a), bound together by predictions that imply religion as destiny (Ozkan, 2021), or concepts that limit religion to domestic politics domain as a precursor to foreign policy thinking rather than being a component of foreign policy making (Bandak, 2018; Rees, 2015). However, these models leave vastly underexplained, the link between religion and foreign policy, as well as the outcomes of the foreign policy. Thus, explaining religion in foreign policy needs to subscribe to at least the following components:

     i.   defining what religion means for the purpose of analysis, to keep its temporal component in the light rather than dismissing it for its supernatural component

ii. allowing for religion to be part of foreign policy thinking (ideas) as well as foreign policy objects, as opposed to restricting it to domestic politics

iii. religion does not depend on particular non-state actors to be part of foreign policy but could operate as part of the agenda of state actors, non-state actors, or even as part of national identities, where its presence cannot be negated

iv. allowing for religion and foreign policy to be part of a diachronic international system, where religion does not indicate a static foreign policy but is allowed to operate alongside other factors resulting in changes in foreign policymaking.

In light of the case study of South Asia discussed in the above sections, and the literature on religion and foreign policy, this chapter attempts to address where and how religion could possibly operate in rational and strategic foreign policy choices. Thus, it seeks to answer the question—how does religion manifest in foreign policy? What are the impacts of religion on regional affairs in South Asia? The chapter analyzes the cases of the three nations since independence and charts out the role of religion in conflicts as well as cooperation among them. The research then studies the presence of religion in the foreign policies of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh toward each other.

The chapter argues that in foreign policy, religion operates distinctly in two ways- namely- implicitly as 'religion in foreign policy' and explicitly as 'religious foreign policy'. While the former is employed for peacebuilding and cooperative efforts, the latter is employed to assert identity and disagreements with neighbors. The chapter argues that religion has played a significant role in carving conflicting identities in the region, not only through domestic politics but by allowing nationalism to be undermined by identification with trans-border religious communities.

6.3. Religion as a Means and End of foreign policy: linking religion with History and strategic thinking

Religion is a vast category of belief systems and practices that can assume several meanings in the context of the physical as well as the metaphysical world. In the context of international politics, it has largely been kept outside the purview of secular international relations theory and only assumed to play "specific roles" in specific political settings (Haynes, 2013b; Sandal & Fox, 2013). On the other hand, Huntington's 'civilizational' conflict theory has assumed warring civilizations and incompatibility of Western and (Eastern) Islamic civilization (and hence, has been criticized for its over-simplification) (Haynes, 2019; Huntington, 1996). To sum up the several approaches to incorporating religion in the analysis of international affairs, religion has either been incorporated into traditional IR theory, or it has receded into religious theories that explain a different version of religion-inspired realism, or secularism has been questioned to make way for religion in a post-secular IR (Chadha, 2022a).

However, this study will first propose a working definition of religion to make it compatible with studying identity and foreign policy. Then the chapter analyses the foreign policies of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh while reflecting on how religion has manifested in them.

This chapter considers/defines religion (used interchangeably with faith) as:

a set of veneration practices and belief systems transcending temporal domains but significantly guiding aspects of human life, society, and institutional structures when adopted as an exegesis, i.e., hegemonic discourse on history and identity.

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This definition allows for treating religion as a "hegemonic discourse" on identity to conduct an inquiry into both- how religion has established itself in the foundation of national identities, and how it has dictated a hegemonic discourse on the same by overseeing interactions between religious symbolism and religious morality becoming the force guiding the formation and subsequent destiny of nations[37]. For Immanuel Kant (1797), moral philosophy broadly reaches religion and politics: one, because the recurrence of ideas surrounding religion and politics in various cultures and at various points in history, find common ground in morality (as "practical reason") (Kant, 2006). For him, a rational foundation of ideas surrounding God and immorality is found in morality instead of mere observance of nature. Two, Kant argues that for a moral agent, placing faith within the vision for establishing a kingdom of ends[38] is inevitable, which might further translate into aspirations for ideas such as "moral deity" and "afterlife" (Kant, 2006).

For Kant, *happiness* is the end that can be presupposed as a natural imperative (end) for all rational human beings. He lays out two imperatives for all rational human beings: the hypothetical imperative, i.e., "that represents the practical necessity of an action as a means to the promotion of happiness" and the moral or categorical imperative, wherein the actions must derive from moral conduct which is derived from universal principles (Kant, 2006, pp. 26–35). While the hypothetical imperative is conditional because it aims to achieve another end, the categorical imperative is unconditional, representing the end in itself.

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[37] As Dingley (2011) stated "religious symbols recall to nationals how to relate to each other in a moral way that supports the legal and formal structure of relations, that becomes the religious (social) force over the individual guiding the nation to its destiny. Each nation reflects its own specific set of relations and so becomes its own religion and truth." (Dingley, 2011)

[38] Here kingdom of ends (or a commonwealth of ends) is defined as a "systematic union of various rational beings through common laws" where "all rational beings stand under the law that each of them is to treat himself and all others never merely as means but always at the same time as ends in themselves" (Kant, 2006, p. 41).

The definition of religion can be relooked for its two main components, as the "belief systems" and worldviews, and the exegesis of each religion as the "hegemonic discourses on both history and identity", i.e., how each religion defines both the history as well as the identity for a set of beings. Assuming the state to be a rational entity, the religion can thus provide both-a worldview for the state, as well as exegesis, that is, its distinct history and identity which it derives from the religion it employs to define itself through. Religion, then, gains a more visible ground in society as well as politics towards the achievement of essential aspects of the existence of the rational entity (state)- *sovereignty and security*. Security can be both physical such as securing national borders, or more intangible such as securing national identities, or national culture.

While these can be assured without religion, the very employment of religion in any diplomatic efforts towards the achievement of security reflects a hypothetical imperative, i.e., religion as an action is not commanded but acts as a means to achieving the fulfillment of another purpose. When religion becomes the key factor in defining what is security and sovereignty of a state that draws its identity and history from religion, the categorical imperative is at play. Religion becomes an end in itself, laying down objectives for the states and assuming a central position within the state sovereignty and security definition, implying that religion as an end must be achieved, unconditionally.

Religion (faith) mirrors, as a means to an end, the hypothetical imperative implying the employment of religion towards efforts to achieve an end by the state. The ends can be positive i.e., either diplomatic cooperation, the establishment of relations, rapprochement, etc., or negative, such as furthering conflict, or starting a new conflict of interests. Religion (faith) as an end reflects the categorical imperative, suggesting that religion itself absorbs the larger discourse

of national history and identity and itself becomes an objective to be achieved unconditionally by pushing for national security. Here, since religion/faith itself becomes the end or objective, achievement of security (through the exercise of exegesis, i.e., interpretation of religion as a hegemonic discourse on history and identity becomes the means to achieve the end goal of religion; where the end is synonymous with (re)establishment and reconsolidation of religion at the center of national history and identity.

6.4. Examining the Presence of Religion in South Asian Politics

We know for sure that religion can't be treated as only a minor or irrelevant factor in analyzing international relations among those countries as it is widely seen in the West, mostly European countries (A. Jaskólska, personal communication, December 22, 2022).

The interactions between religion and national identities become more interesting as objects of analysis in the context of South Asia, where an unorganized religion like Hinduism with centuries' old history interacted with Islam, wherein, "…the very word Islam means submission (to the will of Allah) and the core social values are conformity to the *Umma* (community of the faithful) in which there is no distinction between social, political and economic spheres which are all deemed subject to the religious imperative to maintain the socio-religious community." (Pagden, 2008). While both Hinduism and Islam assert their "truths", Hinduism allows for polytheism and even atheism within its framework, while "Islam claims to be the final revelation of the will and word of Allah and the truth, which enjoins one to remain part of and be submissive to the Umma as the final expression of Allah's will on earth and ultimate truth" – a condition of absoluteness and non-negotiability for a true believer of Islam,

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whether in a traditional orthodox society or in a tolerant multi-faith society (Dingley, 2011). One

implication of this understanding is the exclusivist characteristic of a religion that demands strict

observance of rules and obedience from its followers, who must maintain clear social, cultural,

and thus, hegemonic boundaries in the society, as it interacts with another religion practiced by

the majority population.

In the context of South Asia, even before the independence struggle, British India's

Muslim leader Syed Ahmed Khan argued for Muslims' support of the British. He had remarked

on the establishment of the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1887,

> Now suppose that all the English were to leave India--then who would be the rulers of India? Is it
>
> possible that under these circumstances two nations, Mohammadans and Hindus, could sit on the
>
> same Throne and remain in power? Most certainly not. It is necessary that one of them should
>
> conquer the other and thrust it down. To hope that both could remain equal is to desire the
>
> impossible and inconceivable. (Zaidi, 1988, p. 446)

Religious riots in the 1905 Bengal partition, had set the stage in the subcontinent's history for

more violence and even more politics in the name of religion. All India Muslim League was

founded in 1906 to represent India's Muslims against the secular Indian National Congress

(INC).

If religion had only a role to play in dividing territories and creating new boundaries, the

objective had been achieved with the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, and later with the

establishment of ethnoreligious Bengali territory of Bangladesh. Religion should have receded

into the private lives of the citizens, allowing a secular state to maximize 'rational' national interests. However, religion only increased in presence in regional politics after the division of the Indian subcontinent.

> Wherever religion impacts social engagements and politics, it will impact foreign relations, more so among close neighbors, who were in the past part of one political, social, and economic entity (S. D. Muni, personal communication, November 16, 2022).

For Islamic military dictatorships in Pakistan and Bangladesh, military rule was the harbinger of greater cooperation against Hindu India, including overseeing the rise of Islamic nationalism in the nations through government support as well as among non-state actors promoting radicalization. For India, the period marked the rise of domestic Hindu nationalism that contested the tenets of Indira Gandhi's 'socialism and secularism' that forever altered the course of India's struggle with the incorporation of Western secular ideas commanding the fate of a multi-religious society. While intermittent efforts continued in the region towards reconciliation and peace, geopolitical imperatives, and existing religious animosity pushed for greater securitization of 'sacred' national territories through the acquisition of critical nuclear technology[39], increased militarization across borders, and stringent visa policies that targeted religion and nationality in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The Hindu-Muslim issue that moved the wheels for the subcontinent's partition, continues to pose a serious threat to the future of the nation's prospects of growth, stability, and security within their own neighborhood.

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[39] Pakistan declared itself as the first Muslim nuclear power, after India's 1998 nuclear tests post which both nations were sanctioned by the US.

The figure shows the changes in minority religious populations in independent nations of South Asia, as majority religions continue to feel "threatened" in their own geographical, political, and "sacred" space. The decline in Hindu populations of Pakistan points towards two major historical events: one, a sharp initial decline showing a mass exodus of people from Pakistan and Bangladesh within a few years around the time of independence; and two, a consistently low (and declining) Hindu populations show the lack or failure of government policies to sustain their religious minorities. Minority religions tend to be concentrated in certain parts of the country. For instance, of Pakistan's 2.14% Hindu population, around 94% lives in a few districts of a single province of Sindh. In the case of India (Figure 15, the Muslim population grew steadily, which is one of the concerns of the Hindu nationalists in the country that fear increasing numbers of Muslims who presently make up the second-largest religious majority in India, and the world's third-largest Muslim population.
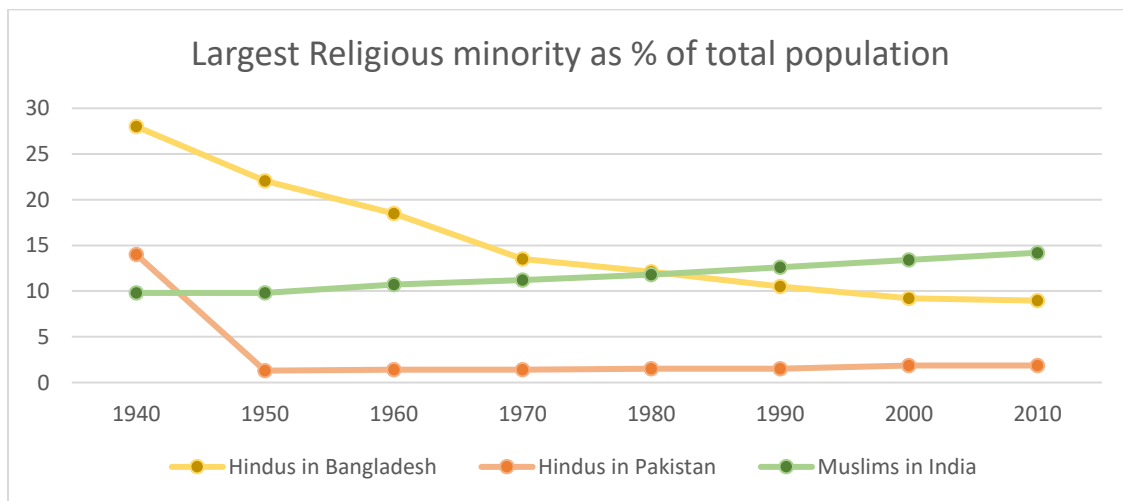

Figure 5: Minority religions as % of the total population.
Source: Prepared by the author.

The religious minorities in South Asia's Muslim-majority nations of Pakistan and Bangladesh have been witnesses to violence and forced conversions, lack equal opportunities by the governments, and have resorted to living as second-class citizens in their land that acquired a different religious identity post-independence. Additionally, regional politics also impacted the treatment of religious minorities, when, for example, after the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War (Second Kashmir War), Pakistan propagated the Enemy Property Act (EPA) that allowed the government unrestrained access to own "enemy" property, where "enemy" in Muslim Pakistan was a Hindu. Bangladesh inherited the legacy of hate and continued to exploit the law under the Vested Property Act (VPA, 1974) towards seizing Hindu land. For the Muslims in these countries that were promised a different fate and different identity through their religious affiliation, "beyond being an (uncomfortable) reminder of a shared past, or alternative possibilities of shared spaces, Christians, Hindus, and Sikhs… symbolize the category of 'enemies from without' who present a threat of other allegiances towards the central idea around which Pakistan is constructed, such as a tenuous suppressed memory of colonialism and imperialism (in the case of Christians) or communalism (in the case of Sikhs and Hindus)" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2019).

In the case of Hindu majority India, while a third of British India's Muslims remained in the country post-independence, the incidents like Noakhali riots and partition violence only added to the cumulative experience of autocratic Muslim rule in India. Thus, Hindu nationalists represented not only a voice against Muslim and Western oppression but also a 'return' to the glorious past that needed to be reclaimed (Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, 1922). For some scholars, this implies the possibility of putting the Hindu nationalists at par with Islamic fundamentalists or other autocrats (Metcalf, 2017). However, the main inference is the potential of this religious animosity to adversely impact not only domestic but also foreign policy. While Hindus fight for

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their identity in South Asia and beyond in sync with India's aspirations of becoming a global power, for Muslims, the existence of religious minorities is at times seen and instrumentalized as an "'intolerable deficit in the purity of the national whole' that has the potential to elicit the Muslim majority's 'rage' … because non-Muslim minorities frustrate the desire of Muslims in Pakistan to perceive themselves as 'a whole and uncontested ethnos'" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 2019).

Having briefly described the presence of religion in South Asia, the succeeding sections take up the two main channels for religion in foreign policy (as suggested in the earlier section) to analyze the foreign policies of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh as they navigate the regional affairs while viewing the region with their own religious lens.

6.5. Religion/Faith as a means

Securitizing the national borders has been the security as well as a foreign policy priority for both India and Pakistan since 1947, and Kashmir has been at the center of this conflict. Despite fighting three major wars and incessant incidents of active hostility at the Line of Control (LOC), New Delhi and Islamabad have experimented with cooperation and conflict resolution over the past few decades, despite intermittently suspending any peace talks and breaking off trade or diplomatic ties. Moreover, despite Kashmir maintaining its centrality in Pakistan's foreign policy, other areas such as Punjab were also divided between India and Pakistan in 1947, leading to the division of populations belonging to Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh religions. In fact, the Sikh empire with its capital in Lahore (in present-day Pakistan) constituted Punjab with two million Sikhs, who belong to the larger umbrella of Indic religions. After partition, Sikhs migrated to India and gradually were persecuted in Pakistan by extremists and

lack of government action to their current numbers well below 10,000 (2012 Pakistan census, because Sikhs were completely removed from the 2017 census). Some of their major holy sites remained in present-day Pakistan, while several *Gurdwaras* (Sikh temples), were either demolished, or converted to schools, toilets, or other public buildings alongside temples of other minority religions in 1947. Hence, the bilateral peace-building efforts have held cross-border religion-based cooperation and pilgrimage at the helm of foreign policies on both sides.

For instance, despite the war of 1971, September 1974 saw the Indian and Pakistani governments negotiating access to pilgrimage sites through the Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines 1974, including seven key sites[40] (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 1974). However, there were several issues with this Protocol since these religious sites were under the Pakistan government control and even when the management was passed on to a Sikh organization called Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in 1999, its chairman was Pakistan's former intelligence agency chief Lt. General Javed Nasir (Bainiwal, 2020).

The 2004 SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) Summit in Islamabad saw the mutual commitment towards normalization of relations with Indian PM Vajpayee stressing on eradication of terrorism on Pakistan's soil and President Musharraf's agreement to the composite bilateral dialogue as well as reducing troops along the borders (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2004). The peace talks once again gained ground after Pakistan Army General and the country's President Musharraf visited India in 2005, after which the Amritsar-Nankana Bus Service was launched in 2006 to connect the two Punjabs on either

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[40] These seven historical pilgrimage sites included Sheikhpura's Gurdwara Sri Nankana Sahib, Rawalpindi's Gurdwara Sri Panja Sahib, as well as Lahore's Samadhi of Maharaj Ranjit Singh, Gurdwara Sri Dera Sahib, Gurdwara Janam Asthan, Gurdwara Deewan Khana, Gurdwara Shaheed Ganj, Singhanian, Gurdwara Bhai Tara Singh, Gurdwara of Sixth Guru, Mozang, Birthplace of Sri Guru Ram Das and Gurdwara Cheveen Padshahi, Mozang (Bainiwal, 2020).

side of the Wagah border. India's then Sikh Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated that "I hope this bus service opens yet another chapter in improving the relations between our two countries" alluding to the preceding policies on bus service from Srinagar to Muzzafarabad (2005) as well as a rail link from Munnabao to Khokrapar (2006) to promote trade, religious tourism and "emotional bond between the two sides of the border" (Press Trust of India, 2006; M. Singh, 2006). It must be noted that India at that time attempted to de-hyphenate religion-based peace-building measures in the Kashmir dispute with PM Singh stating:

> I am aware that General Musharraf has often stated that the normalization of relations between our two countries cannot move forward unless what he calls the core issue of Jammu & Kashmir is dealt with. In my view, it is a mistake to link the normalization of other relations with finding a solution to Jammu & Kashmir. But we are not afraid of discussing Jammu & Kashmir or of finding, pragmatic, practical solutions to resolve this issue as well. (M. Singh, 2006)

As Pakistan's foreign policy under President Musharraf remained closely tied to Kashmir for its majority Muslim population, India's foreign policy continued to emphasize the need to open hard borders for freer movement of people and goods, with the condition of curbing domestic and cross-border violence. The South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) was discussed in 2005 in Bangladesh before being signed in 2006 based on the move by India to render borders less relevant (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2005). In effect, India's neighborhood policy was an aim to connect regions in South Asia economically, while resolving border issues with countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh, i.e., through proper fencing of the permeable and militarized borders (Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2006). India-

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Bangladesh relations meanwhile, had been oscillating between terrorism-spurred tensions and diplomatically restored stability owing to the rampant rise of Islamic fundamentalism in Bangladesh leading to persecution of Hindus as well as Ahmadiyya Muslims in the Sunni majority nation ruled by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 2006). The period between 2001-2006 has been termed the "worst phase" in the Bangladesh-India relationship due to the establishment of "transnational Islamic terrorist groups including the al Qaeda in Bangladesh" (Datta, 2010)[41].

India made a prematurely optimistic political statement during PM Singh's Kashmir visit where he stressed the need to normalize relations with Pakistan, and stabilize Jammu and Kashmir, because while India could not "change borders" but could "make them irrelevant" (The Hindu, 2008). One month later on November 26, 2008, a large-scale terrorist attack in Mumbai was "planned, executed and launched from Pakistani territory" by a 10-member squad of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) (Laskar, 2021; Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2021). Meanwhile, with the Awami League coming back to power under Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina in 2010, the Supreme Court in the nation also restored 'secularism'[42]. India resumed bilateral talks with Pakistan in 2011 and also allowed foreign direct investment from Islamabad in 2012 after extending MFN (most favored nation) clause to Pakistan ahead of visa agreements to ease bilateral tensions after the 2008 attacks (Gul, 2012).

After Bangladesh's reaffirmation of secularism, the India-Bangladesh border dispute was resolved in September 2011, including the exchange of enclaves and religious populations

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[41] Links between Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and the Harkat-ul-Jihadi-Islami (HUJI) divisions of terror groups from Pakistan and Bangladesh were found in connection with the attacks on US Consulate in Kolkata (Indian state of West Bengal bordering Bangladesh) (Datta, 2010).

[42] It was eventually re-constitutionalized in 2015 through the 15th amendment, however Islam was maintained as the state religion

(Ferdoush, 2019; Ministry of External Affairs of India, 2011). International Crimes Tribunal in Bangladesh found Jamaat-e-Islami members guilty of war crimes against Hindu Bengalis during the 1971 Bangladesh War of Independence atrocities. As the terrorist group's members were awarded capital punishment, protests erupted in Bangladesh including attacks on Bengali Hindus (The Guardian, 2013). However, with the Pakistan National Assembly's resolution against the conviction and capital punishment of Jamaat-e-Islami leader Abdul Quader Molla by Bangladesh, it was viewed as Pakistan's interference in independent Bangladesh's domestic policy as people launched protests outside Pakistan's High Commission in Bangladesh and Dhaka summoned Pakistan's High Commissioner over the resolution (The Tribune, 2013). Bangladesh's government maintained its position on Jamaat-e-Islami. In November 2013, a regular joint retreat ceremony was initiated between border forces of India and Bangladesh along the Petrapole (West Bengal, India) - Benapole (Bangladesh) border (National Herald, 2022). Indian Parliament also proceeded to pass the Land Boundary Agreement through the 100th Constitutional Amendment resolving colonial-era border disputes.

After 2014, under the PM Modi administration, Indian foreign policy advanced religio-cultural connectivity in the neighborhood through the promotion of traditional Indian art and Vedic heritage with the launch of New Delhi's international Buddhist conferences alongside 'tourist circuits' to promote pilgrimage-route tours on sacred routes of Hinduism and Buddhism under the PRASAD scheme (National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive), connecting India's Act East Policy as well as Neighborhood First Policy (Ramachandran, 2015; The Indian Express, 2015). PM Modi's foreign policy explicitly expressed its roots in cultural and religious aspects of the nation such as the global dissemination of Yoga, Ayurveda, etc. to link geopolitical visions of free, open, prosperous, and inclusive Indo-

Pacific as well as SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region) through civilizational commonalities among like-minded nations (Chadha, 2022c). This was also reflected in Indian President Ramnath Kovind's Dhaka visit to inaugurate the Ramna Kali temple in Dhaka, which was destroyed by Pakistan forces during 1971 Operation Searchlight before the Bangladesh War of Independence (Gill & Roychowdhury, 2021).

India's relations with the Muslim nations have also improved under its new Look West policy, where PM Modi has sought to construct a religious-cultural bridge between Arab Muslim nations and India's Muslim heritage. In the World Sufi Forum, PM Modi stated

> Just as India became a principal centre of Islamic civilisation, our nation also emerged as one of the most vibrant hubs of Sufism…Sufism blossomed in India's openness and pluralism. It engaged with her spiritual tradition and evolved its own Indian ethos…We see it in the spiritual and intellectual tradition of India. (Prime Minister's Office, 2016)

Despite several Muslim nations, including Pakistan's opposition to India's policies such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and Article 370 revoking autonomous rule in Jammu & Kashmir, PM Modi's larger policy to incorporate Kashmir as a part of India and increase economic activity as well as an investment in the region became evident in 2020. Allocating a budget of INR 1 trillion in 2020-21 for the post-Article 370 Jammu & Kashmir towards development, the BJP government announced a Hindu and Sufi tourist circuit in Kashmir to promote religious-based cultural exchange, boost tourism in Kashmir and open the region for tourism, that has long been conflict-ridden (Javaid, 2020).

6.6. Religion/Faith as the end

While the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress engaged in political animosity over the division of India, religious riots were already charting the way for persistent inter-religious conflict in the subcontinent. Bengal province's Noakhali riots were a sequence of Hindu massacres, sexual violence, and confiscation of Hindu properties conducted by the then-Bengal's Muslim community from October to November 1946 (Khan, 2007, pp. 62–68). About ninety-five percent of Hindus in Noakhali were forcefully converted to Islam and subjected to violence, after failed intervention by leaders like Gandhi, who had to give up the Peace Mission after attempts by the Muslim population to burn Hindus alive. He was reportedly quoted telling Hindus in Noakhali to either "leave Noakhali or die" (Associated Press, 1947).

As pointed out by Raghavan (2020, p. 33), the partition of India was religious violence-propelled and permeated to all bordering/partitioned provinces such as Punjab where the Punjab Boundary Force of British India was embroiled in religious violence in August 1947, to the extent that there was reported "communal tension within the Punjab Boundary Force, and there is a likelihood that the troops may be shooting at each other". Punjab was divided, but the violence continued against religious minorities, mainly Sikhs in the divided province. While efforts towards connecting the two Punjabs have been only moderately successful in the short term and largely failed due to the separatist movements in the region by Sikhs demanding a separate homeland in Punjab, it only reflects the extent of religious and ideological animosity between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Kashmir has been another foreign policy challenge for the two nations. At present, efforts towards resolving the Kashmir conflict have traditionally been at the heart of the India-Pakistan

relations, their failures have been responsible for the fallout of bilateral agreements between New

Delhi and Islamabad aimed at curbing interreligious violence and refugee crisis. Communal

violence during and after the partition in 1947, caused over 1 million Hindus to seek refuge in

India as they escaped persecution in East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) as well as West Pakistan

(present Pakistan). India's Hindu nationalists demanded government action, but the ruling Indian

National Congress under PM Nehru signed the Liaquat-Nehru Pact 1950 with Pakistan's Liaquat

Ali Khan in Delhi wherein both governments would

…agree that each shall ensure, to the minorities throughout its territory, complete equality of

citizenship, irrespective of religion, a full sense of security in respect of life, culture, property and

personal honour, freedom of movement within each country and freedom of occupation, speech and

worship, subject to law and morality. Members of the minorities shall have equal opportunity with

members of the majority community to participate in the public life of their country, to hold political

or other office, and to serve in their country's civil and armed forces. Both Governments declare these

rights to be fundamental and undertake to enforce them effectively. (Raghavan, 2020, p. 65)

Indian Constitution, based on the civilizational idea of secularism, accommodated its

Muslim population alongside other religious minorities. For decades, INC held power and led the

government in independent India. Pakistan also declared itself an Islamic state with secular

values to allow freedom to practice any religion. However, the project of Islamization in Pakistan

reversed the initial vision of secularism, leading to systemic persecution of not only Hindus,

Sikhs, and Christians, but also of Ahmadiyya Muslims and Baloch Muslims. Unequal

government policies, the presence of blasphemy laws against Islam, and biased education policy

led to the inculcation of hatred towards Hindus in the country as Islamic Studies were made compulsory for students of all religions (Lall, 2008). Durrani & Dunne (2009) have argued that Pakistan's national curriculum instrumentalized Islam as the boundary between the Muslim Pakistani 'self' and the antagonist non-Muslim 'other', causing the normalization of violence over identities and radicalization among youth. Haqqani (2004) has underscored the success of Islamic unity against the security challenges posed by India, which was largely seen as betting on the premature downfall of the idea of Pakistan. Thus, the constructed Muslim unity and homogeneity of religion have been instrumental in securing Pakistan's religious territory, which gains significant identity from being an adversary to Hindu India. That also implies that Pakistan draws the central component of its identity from Islam, which is also its characteristic in foreign policy but a challenge to its internal security, given the fact that all states except Punjab face separatist movements in Pakistan's weak democracy. The separation of Bangladesh in 1971, added to the religious-political mix the issue of ethnicity and need to securitize the ethnic component of Pakistan's identity versus a multi-ethnic India and largely monolinguistic and monoethnic Bangladesh (Cohen, 2002).

Pakistan's emphasis on Muslim identity, and the centrality of Kashmir in its foreign policy are closely linked, given that it has fought almost all major wars with India on the unresolved Kashmir dispute. While parts of the region are administered by India and Pakistan, Kashmir since 1947, took the characteristic of Pakistan's policy towards religion. Being a Muslim-majority state, it was ruled by a Hindu king till 1947. Increased militarization and Islamic radicalization subjected Kashmiri Hindus to persecution and violence by militants from the 1980s to the 1990s. Militancy, terrorism, and radicalization continue to pose a security challenge in both parts of separately administered areas of Kashmir (M. Hill & Motwani, 2017).

South Asia is also characterized by religious violence spreading across borders with communities maintaining trans-border religious affinities. Ayodhya, in present-day North India, has been witness to another colonial religious conflict that spread across borders after independence. The first recorded riots between Hindus and Muslims under the British government took place in 1856-57 at the site considered Lord Ram's birthplace, and a suit was filed in British India's court in 1885 by Hindus seeking access to the area. The British only allowed access to the outer courtyard, denying access or claim to the Babri mosque on the land constructed by Mughal emperor Babar in 1528 (M Siddiq (D) Thr Lrs v. Mahant Suresh Das & Ors, 2019). The issue continued for a century till the mosque was demolished in 1992 by Hindu organizations leading to communal violence in Ayodhya, the birthplace of the Hindu God Ram, and the site of a temple in his name. For the Hindu organizations, Babri Masjid was representative of Muslim atrocities and land-grab, while for the subcontinent's Muslims, it has been a sacred legacy of the Muslim empire since 1528 (BBC, 2019; Srivastava, 1991).

While Hindu nationalist parties gained domestic attention as well as votes in India over the next few years, an immediate consequence of the demolition was an eruption of communal riots in the country. In Pakistan, diplomatic protests were lodged, alongside protests by nations in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference. Pakistan's Muslims demolished thirty Hindu temples while calling for "jihad" against Hindus, and the subsequent exodus of several Hindus seeking protection from religious persecution in Pakistan (New York Times, 1992). In Bangladesh, similar violence ensued resulting in the reported death of some people, and the destruction of eleven Hindu temples and some homes, followed by the cancellation of the Hindu festival of Durga Puja in 1993 (Refworld, 2004). A 2019 verdict by the Supreme Court of India finally settled the legal matter over ownership of the 2.77 acres of land in Ayodhya after archaeological

evidence of the pre-existence of non-Islamic and "distinctly indigenous structures on the site in mosque's foundation, i.e., predating the mosque[43] (M Siddiq (D) Thr Lrs v. Mahant Suresh Das & Ors, 2019). However, religion continues to challenge South Asian security and the India-Pakistan-Bangladesh relationship.

A continued history of religion-based identity assertion, coupled with religion-backed violence has continued to torment and challenge the internal and regional security of the region armed with nuclear weapons (India and Pakistan). Although Indian-Bangladesh relations have improved much since 2010, Bangladesh-Pakistan ties have only begun to normalize, and India-Pakistan relations have peaked and troughed only within a range of previously defined and observed cross-border clashes that fall short of a full-scale war, any progress achieved in regional or bilateral relations continues to be threatened by a similar cycle of repetitive religious violence. Religious assertiveness in the region has increased the probability of violent clashes bearing on political gains and losses. The recent example being the Citizenship Amendment Act in India, and the revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir in 2019, both present as recent examples of domestic policies quickly expanding into a trans-border religious issue in and beyond South Asia.

In August 2019, Indian Parliament passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Bill, thus revoking Article 370 which was a temporary provision of the Indian Constitution that granted special status to Jammu & Kashmir (Sodhi, 2021). The territories of Jammu and Kashmir were stripped of their status as states and made union territories, while Ladakh (the region

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[43] According to the Supreme Court judgement 2019, entire disputed land of area of 2.77 acres was allocated for the construction of Ram temple while an alternative piece of land of area of 5 acres was allocated to the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board for the construction of a mosque at a suitable place within Ayodhya. The court also declared the Babri Masjid demolition and desecration in violation of law (M Siddiq (D) Thr Lrs v. Mahant Suresh Das & Ors, 2019).

bordering China with conflict along the Line of Actual Control with Chinese People's Liberation Army forces) was separated from Jammu & Kashmir and granted a separate territorial recognition. Domestically, the act provided direct administration by the central government to monitor and control cross-border terrorism, as well as establish new laws for an economic and security-related roadmap for the region. However, Kashmir, being a Muslim-majority region is a foreign policy priority in Pakistan and the center of the India-Pakistan conflict. Thus, the unilateral revocation of Article 370 in the India-administered Kashmir furthered the tension between the two countries, with Pakistan "relegating diplomatic ties, shutting its airspace, and halting bilateral trade with India" (Firstpost, 2019; Government of Pakistan, 2019).

The Citizens Amendment Act (CAA) granted fast-track citizenship to refugees who entered India on or after December 31, 2014, from neighboring states of Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan escaping religious persecution in the Muslim-majority nations (Government of India, 2019). Since the Act made a religion-based granting of citizenship in India to non-Muslim refugees of persecuted religious minorities from India's immediate neighborhood, it was perceived as discriminatory by Muslim refugees and Muslims of the subcontinent for being a Hindu nationalist strategy towards the achievement of a Hindu nation. On the other hand, India's Home Minister Amit Shah from the BJP stated that CAA was a consequence of Pakistan's failure to protect its minorities[44]or to enact and enforce the signed Liaquat-Nehru Agreement of 1950, as well as a necessity in the face of increasing persecution of Hindus, Buddhists and Christians in Bangladesh (Dixit, 2021; Haider, 2014). Moreover, violent protests erupted in India with the Muslim population opposing the law that excluded Muslim refugees from Pakistan,

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[44] Dr Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, member of the Pakistan's then-ruling Muslim League-Nawaz, had declared in the National Assembly in Islamabad that around 5000 Hindus migrated to India from Pakistan annually fearing forced conversion and violence (Haider, 2014)

Bangladesh, and Afghanistan. The contention regarding the CAA unveils another site of divergent exegesis by states. Islam has a very narrow definition in Pakistan, which results in the exclusion of not only other religions but also several categories of Muslims such as Ahmadiyya. In Bangladesh, there is a historic, political, and policy-determined distinction between communities such as the majority Bengalee Muslims and minority Bihari Muslims. Thus, certain Muslim communities in Pakistan (minority Shia or Ahmadiyya community discriminated against for being blasphemous and different from majority Sunni Muslims) as well as Bangladesh (minority Bihari Muslims discriminated against for their pro-West Pakistan stance during 1971 War), are persecuted within their nations. However, in India, the aforementioned Muslim communities are considered no different from Muslims in general, and hence, not considered eligible for Indian citizenship specifically based on religious persecution from nations with Islam as the state religion.

> The moves [such as CAA] have ripple effects in the neighboring countries of Pakistan and Bangladesh where hate crimes against minorities may not be "reported" as widely. (S. Basu, personal communication, January 07, 2023).

In response to the CAA, Pakistan passed a resolution in its National Assembly against the Act stating that the BJP government was "fast leading India into a Hindu Rashtra, where minorities, particularly the Muslims, are facing the brunt of persecution" (Wasim, 2019)[45].

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[45] One interviewed expert expressed similar views about India and Pakistan's religion based foreign policy: "Hindu nationalism has begun to shape foreign policy in various shades since Modi has become Prime Minister. In Pakistan, Islam has always been part of foreign policy" (EXP-2, personal communication, January 04, 2023).

Bangladesh's Foreign Minister A. K. Abdul Momen pointed to the threats to close and friendly Bangladesh and India relations, since "naturally our people (Bangladeshis) expect that India won't do anything that could create anxiety among them", while also counter-claiming that India's Home Minister Amit Shah's allegations of minority representation in Bangladesh were "untrue" (Press Trust of India, 2019). While Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina called the CAA law "unnecessary" in the face of the existing issue of over a million Rohingya Muslims' immigration into Bangladesh, posing a serious security and stability challenge in South Asia (Bhattacherjee, 2020). Bangladesh also canceled senior-level meetings with India such as those of Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, and also State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam's scheduled address at the Raisina Dialogue in New Delhi, expressing fears over the "Rohingya-like wave of migration to Bangladesh from India" as a result of CAA (Bhattacherjee, 2020).

India continues to face challenges in its neighborhood, as well as domestically due to the increasing religious polarization in the country, the mounting backlash it attracts through domestic and regional opposition, and the lack of appropriate response to either manage the recurrent religion-based clashes or counter the persistent narratives that draw parallels between BJP's democratically elected administration with authoritarian rule in other parts of the world. Moreover, the unfavorable perceptions of BJP's Hindu nationalist agenda are reflected in each instance of international hostile response to its dealings with Muslims in the Hindu-majority nation.

Bangladesh's key challenge includes being able to sustain a national identity that does not exclude its minority religious and ethnic populations in a nation that is constitutionally secular and yet has an official State religion. Despite several movements and election promises,

no political party in Bangladesh has a political incentive to remove Islam as a state region in order to truly practice secularism in the Muslim-majority country. Instead, even PM Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League has been criticized for the enactment of the Digital Security Act (2018) for the prosecution of any citizen hurting religious sentiments, in an aim to crack down on secularists and atheists in the country (Mostofa, 2020). Dhaka's legal provisions risk following the path of the Blasphemy Laws enacted in Pakistan, under which as recently as 2021, the Anti-Terrorism Court sentenced three people to death for posting blasphemous content on social media (Naseer, 2021). But there is more that Bangladesh risks sharing with Pakistan under the present state of religious extremism and anti-India sentiment in the country when widespread violent riots broke out on Indian PM Modi's visit to Dhaka to celebrate Bangladesh's fifty years of independence.

Overall, with such occurrences that jeopardize regional security and peace, Pakistan risks falling into a deeper political crisis alongside a persistent economic crisis and security challenges along its Afghanistan border, and Bangladesh risks losing the decades of social and economic progress it has achieved as a nation independent of Pakistan, and India risks its larger strategic vision of being a regional security provider in the Indo-Pacific if its own neighbors were to turn hostile amid religious-political rifts as they grow and seek greater influence in charting the region's destiny. Religion, despite its potential as a means of cooperation and a reason that can bridge communities across borders, has

>…significantly shrunk and lowered the civic spaces and the prospect to return to more inclusivity
>and accommodation. [There exist] trauma of shared history and the brutal divide, mistrust, lack of
>communication and the investment in constituencies of conflict, divide, hatred, and violence by

concerned stakeholders, than in constituencies of peace (S. Malik, personal communication, November 28, 2022).

6.7. Concluding remarks

A look at religion, defined through two components: one that provides a worldview and one that is subject to exegesis that in turn offers a hegemonic discourse on history and identities, reveals two overarching trends when religion intersects with politics, and mainly, foreign policy. One, religion/faith as a means as a hypothetical imperative, was employed in foreign policy towards achievement of largely positive ends i.e., channelizing cooperation, and promoting rapprochement despite religious tensions. This resulted in not only (partial) achievement of interstate cooperation but also softening of national borders, where religious communities were granted access to religious sites for pilgrimage or tourism as part of the larger diplomatic effort to normalize inter-state relations and ease religious-political tension. Two, religion/faith as the end as a categorical imperative was seen as a hindrance in the achievement of interstate peace. In the case of religion dictating and unconditionally commanding securitization of itself, it resulted in the redefinition of the national territory as sacred religious territory and culminated in increased cross-border frictions (especially between India and Pakistan), diplomatic tensions, and hardening of national borders through the restricted movement of people and goods within the region.

Analysis of the cases: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh since independence, reveals that since religion was allowed to dictate the course of their identity, it also manifested in their

foreign policy, which was heavily biased towards securitizing religious identities as well as asserting 'sacred borders'. However, foreign policy's interaction with domestic politics embroiled in religion, had two observable outcomes: 'religion in foreign policy' and 'religious foreign policy'. The former exemplified by pilgrimage diplomacy was employed towards peacebuilding, in a way that religion was instrumentalized to bridge the 'sacred territories' and make national borders porous. These policies were aimed at cultural exchange and pilgrimage diplomacy to ease religious tensions. However, these policies were weak as they did not address the core issues of religious animosity, but rather treated them superficially through the opening of "channels and paths" across borders. These policies failed to generate the required peacebuilding, trust-building, or confidence-building mechanisms, because of a lack of provision in the policies to ensure implementation at the ground level with benefits reaching the intended religious communities.

The 'religious foreign policy' implied an attempt towards asserting religious identity and goals towards establishing its hegemonic discourse. These policies were framed as solutions to the problem of religion after assessing cross-border interactions of minority religions and their treatment by the dominant religion. Examples of these were CAA and allowing neighbors' domestic politics to impact their own treatment of religious minorities within the 'sacred borders' by identifying more with another cross-border community with a common religious affiliation. These policies were also implemented to express disagreement with neighbors in their handling of domestic faith-based politics. This led to not only the elevation of tensions and conflicts but a re-affirmation of animosity defined by religion and empowered by painful memories and experiences of violence in the past. The cumulative impact was a greater trust deficit as well as threats to regional stability, while also failing to find a solution to the problem

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of religion identified as a result of interactions between hegemonic religious discourses in society and external policies in the neighborhood.

Overall, religion's presence in foreign policy allowed faith to hijack the national narrative and nationalism to be undermined by identification with trans-border religious communities. The manifestations of religion from an affiliation to it at the individual level to a national-level conformity present an interesting problem that requires multi-dimensional examination in assessing whether religions impact the destiny of nations when they permeate the hegemonic discourse of their national identities. The cases of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh present the challenges of the East in trying to navigate the Western categories of religion and secularism, as they emerged from the colonial experience, looking for distinct national identities after millennia of shared history and cultural heritage. On the domestic level religion does appear to dictate the rules of the domestic as well as regional political games by constantly maintaining relevance for its consumers, i.e., citizens of the religion-defined nations. Religion also seems to dictate socio-cultural constraints, as well as plausible actions without claiming to define foreign policy outcomes. However, the implication is that as long as these nations continue to 'play' religion, they also expose themselves to be played with and risk finding themselves in the same cycle of tackling religion-stoked challenges that create a power vacuum to be filled by religion.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: The way ahead with and despite religion in international relations

7.1. South Asian Challenges and the Impact of Exegesis

South Asia remains one of the most unstable and conflict-ridden regions in the world, with two nuclear powers. The 1947 division of British India into India and Pakistan was not the first, but an undeniably catastrophic refugee crisis with states engaging in a massive population exchange to form Muslim Pakistan, against a designated antagonistic Hindu India. While the two nations have still not settled borders or reconciled issues over conflicting histories, they continue to exist in an exegesis-derived framework that marks the other as an enemy. These conflicting national histories and identities not only cause the India-Pakistan war over territory in 1965 and 1999 but also led to the emergence of an independent Bangladesh. The latter didn't see itself as part of Urdu-speaking Pakistan with a very different, and conflicting exegesis of Islam leading to a colonizer-colonized relationship between the two wings of Pakistan between 1947-1971. But religion continues to remain a vast term, that needs to be distinguished from its reinterpretation by states as a hegemonic discourse on history, i.e., exegesis, as discussed in the preceding chapters. Distinct exegeses in the subcontinent of shared religions and common past have led to conflicting views of history, and regional security as well as the approaches of South Asian nations towards one another.

South Asia has become one of the major foreign policy focuses of global powers through the Indo-Pacific vision wherein India aims to be a global power and a net security provider in the

region. Pakistan seeks to create a distinct identity from its archrival India, based on its emphasis on the "Islamic Republic" component of national identity, which at times, supersedes other rational and urgent objectives such as the establishment of democracy without military interference, supporting economic growth, and combating religious extremism. On this front, Bangladesh aims to steer clear of its past as part of Pakistan and differentiate itself as an ethnic-Bengali nation with Islam as the majority religion. As a growing Indo-Pacific economy, Bangladesh's growth is indispensable to regional development and stability, however, an overemphasized state religion continues to hamper its possibility of effectively resolving religious frictions or implementing secularism in letter and spirit. Overall, for the region that depends heavily on nationalism, exegesis has enabled religious nationalism over nationalism despite faith, leading to a complex cycle of reinterpretation of religion to feed political objectives, while concretizing the othering of religious communities within national boundaries and alienating them through exegesis-derived state identity and policy. Thus, religion through exegesis has maintained its presence and influence in shaping official history, demarcating national identities, and extending perceptions of legitimate sacred territories, while defining and being impacted by the course of foreign policy in South Asia. However, exegesis has achieved more than just divisions and conflict, something that needs revising in theory and practice, as attempted in succeeding sections.

7.2. Religion and its Presence in IR

The first research question that this research sought to answer was:

1. How can religion be factored into IR theory and international relations?

A critical analysis of the literature that investigates religion in international relations theory revealed several key observations. One, religion itself has been assumed to be an invention, mainly for socio-political objectives. However, when viewed as only an invention, limits the discussion of what religion can do to international relations theory. Secondly, considering religion as something that needs to be overcome to advance into a Westphalian state on the path of modernity, overlooks unique historical processes and experiences of nations with an emphasis on religious identity despite modern state apparatus. These risks render IR theory incapable of explaining the presence of religion or accommodating such cases that exist in abundance in non-Western societies. This leads to the third key point related to the assumed coupling of modernity with the principles of secularism. However, religion has found political expression in states despite the presence, reconceptualization, or absence of secularism, challenging the notion of 'religious' being antagonistic to 'secular'. Rather, religion has emerged as a factor in domestic politics, global diplomacy, and conflict or its resolution. The fifth observation is the domination of Eurocentric IR and its difference from an emerging but secluded intellectual framework provided by non-Western IR and its understanding of religion in international relations. Lastly, research on religion in IR also includes attempts to develop religious IR frameworks, but they remain exclusive to one faith and do not accommodate other religious frameworks, reducing their explanatory power as IR theories.

The problem while dealing with religion in IR theory is that it is a very broad term and needs to be redefined or reconceptualized in a way that allows an abstract idea of faith and the supernatural to be dealt with in a simplified yet more effective manner for application and examination in the realm of politics, diplomacy, and international relations. Thus, the theoretical

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framework as well as the concepts employed to study religion in the realm of IR, need to address the above challenges, while avoiding over-complexity. This research argues that Neo-classical Realism offers a more comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding how religion operates in politics and policymaking. Focused mainly on the analysis of foreign policy, NCR aims to comprehend the environment of international politics and how inter-state interaction takes place. While states are constrained by characteristics of this international system, each state, as a unit is also impacted by domestic politics, including strategic culture, perceptions of the foreign policy elite, etc. However, NCR is neither ripe for incorporating religion into understanding how religion operates, nor does it provide conceptual clarity for the analysis of the impacts of religion on state foreign policy.

As discussed in Chapter 3, religion has been previously defined in many different ways to accommodate both- the meta-narrative of God (supernatural), life, and material manifestations that govern the self-referential religious universe of each religion. However, since several IR studies focus on Abrahamic faiths, the definitions of religion do not accommodate other religious frameworks or Asian faiths. Hence, this research proposed a working definition of religion as: "a set of veneration practices and belief systems transcending temporal domains but significantly guide aspects of human life, society, and institutional structures when adopted as a hegemonic discourse on identity".

This research argued that this working definition then allows for seeing diverse religious formulations of the world viewing not as approaches to "God, the supernatural or spiritual" but as readings of history that characterize the material world. While politics reads and even plays religion, religions, too, have a distinct view of temporal affairs. Thus, to deal with the material world and politics, a concept was proposed to conceptualize this 'reading of the world' as an

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exercise by states through a religious lens, i.e., exegesis. Exegesis, in this research, is defined as an "interpretation of religion as a historical discourse" instead of a spiritual or supernatural/metaphysical discourse. The dissertation hypothesized the following, by incorporating exegesis in NCR to detect and study the impact of religion on IR:

i.   The debate over the 'return' of religion and its place in IR could be better understood by examining the debate over the place of history in IR.

ii.   By acknowledging the differences in how IR understands history, the groundwork for examining religion in IR can be laid through exegesis where the past lends to historicism, what religion lends to exegesis: a worldview and the historian/exegete's position in it, that gets revealed through the examination of what constitutes their history/exegesis in the backdrop of their theoretical commitments/religion.

iii. NCR, which does not struggle with history as neorealism does, offers the appropriate ground for operationalizing religion through exegesis in IR.

For this research, religion in its original form could be inaccessible, since it belongs to the past, but exegesis as a state exercise provides operationalization of religion in state identity and foreign policy. Religion encompasses narratives of a glorious but unobservable past while exegesis lends it the necessary wheels for political relevance. The relationship between religion and exegesis can be quite analogous to history and historiography, where religion and history are both inaccessible, while exegesis and historiography, respectively provide a contextual boundary to link the intelligible with the unperceivable. Exegesis as a historical discourse, (like historiography) is an interpretive exercise conducted by states, and in theory, it paves the way for simultaneously studying religion as well as history within the IR frameworks. Thus, this research

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argued that exegesis operationalizes religion in IR and international relations. Thus, theoretically, the roles that religion plays in politics are outcomes of exegeses, i.e., exegesis prepares the leveling ground for religion to play those different roles as a political legitimizer, transboundary political influencer, rule-setter in issues related to society, culture, and faith, etc.

7.3. Overcoming Religion and the Problem of History in NCR through exegesis

Exegesis in NCR was assumed to have a different impact on various parts of the international system comprising national identities, domestic politics, and foreign policy. However, the impact of state-specific exegesis was assumed to be very limited on the international system as a whole. The hypothesis was that the more generalizable the part, the lower the extent to which exegesis could exercise influence on it. Thus, in a multiplicity of exegesis (domestic historical discourses) by multiple exegetes (states), exegesis has a greater degree of influence on domestic-level intervening variables i.e., national identity, domestic politics, etc. It was also hypothesized that foreign policy would also bear the impact of exegesis, however, by interaction with the international system, the impact of exegesis on foreign policy would be diluted.

Theoretically, exegesis was incorporated in NCR in three different ways, to analyze the presence and impact of religion in identities, domestic politics, and foreign policies:

- *Religion in state identities*: exegesis had two functions in narrating official histories- one, exegesis formed the intellectual and historical rationale behind the creation of separate states based on religion; exegesis also allowed narration of a state-specific history,

despite shared pasts. The outcome was official state histories, based on religion as well as official state identities that created a distinction between religious communities within and beyond state borders. Exegesis enabled the incorporation of these distinctions within a state into the constitution, allowed states to choose their traumas, and created irreconcilable histories to sustain intergenerational conflicts among and within states.

- *Religion in secularism(s)*: exegesis was a state response to the ontological security threat faced by decolonized nations, seeking distinct identities as modern secular states. Exegesis was also the intended solution to the problem of religion-defined states with a ruptured historical process of modernization, resulting in religion continuing to mark its presence on domestic and cross-border politics. The overall outcome was a religion-specific definition of secularism, and conflicting state identities imagined as secular states but governed largely by state exegesis.

- *Religion in foreign policy*: exegesis impacted foreign policy in two main ways- one, exegesis as a means to achieve another rational security objective of the state; and two, exegesis as an end in itself, sidelining other rational state objectives. While the former employs a broader worldview and softening of national borders (religion in foreign policy), the latter holds a narrow religious worldview (religious foreign policy) resulting in securitized national identities and the hardening of sacred national territories. Consequently, the more probable outcome of religion in foreign policy is conflict resolution and peacebuilding through religious dialogue, however, a religious foreign policy is more likely to result in the intensification of inter-state identity conflicts.

When religion is viewed as a faith-based framework, it involves several transcendental components that are eternal and do not deal directly with the temporal affairs of the state.

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However, exegesis provides that bridge between an inaccessible past and philosophical guideline on how what has (been believed to have) happened, governs the present, and also the future. Exegesis is a reinterpretation of the past, and as an outcome of the process, the reconceptualization of present realities. Thus, while religion can be a shared factor, exegesis emerges from distinct cultural and socio-political experiences of a nation, while narrating the history, guiding policy, and leading the present in nations where religion is a fundamental component of identity. In South Asia, religion, as understood through nation-specific exegesis, has been instrumental in accomplishing more than just conflicts. Religion has transformed its presence in political spheres in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, from being a dominant dividing force in the subcontinent to a significant factor that ties Islamic nations to countries beyond the region. Exegesis, on the other hand, has maintained its stronghold in the minds of nationalist leaders, citizens' imaginations, and securitized national identities. The following sections deal with the empirical analysis and the second research question of the dissertation:

2. How has religion impacted and shaped South Asian international relations

(the case of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh)?

7.4. Exegesis as official history and national destiny

2.1. How has religion impacted the mutual perceptions in South Asia among the triad of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh?

Exegesis permits the comparison of varying interpretations of the same religion or among different denominations of the same religion. By doing so, exegesis offers the direction of how a

religion perceives governance of human society, how it creates transborder imagined communities, and how it reads the history of humankind. The last function of exegesis is crucial when understanding how one can overcome the inaccessible past by narrating a history. Additionally, as stated in Chapter 3, while exegetical analysis of religion does not offer a conclusion to the nature of religious scriptures, exegesis can nevertheless be indicative and metaphorical in its interpretations of religion; it can be subjected to subsequent critical analysis to reveal multiple layers of meanings and hidden agendas as it operationalizes the religion in IR.

This critical analysis of exegesis-derived and narrated histories has been undertaken in Chapter 4. The analysis shows that when official histories are dispersed as mass education, a context-specific perception of the past overpowers the representative voices of religious minorities to the extent that they cannot find themselves in the narrow official history anymore. The analysis of history textbooks also demonstrates that since the official history is narrated to an imagined homogeneous audience/reader, any reader that does not identify with the exegesis-defined state history represents communities that are overlooked or are invisible to the state. Since South Asia has been a significant ground for religion-based conflicts and securitized national identities, the following sub-research questions were posed to understand the linkages between exegesis, national identities, and official national narrative:

i.   How has exegesis impacted/affected the construction of national identities, i.e., "religion-backed imagined communities" in post-colonial South Asia?

ii.   How has religion impacted/affected the narrative of a nation, i.e., how viewing history through a religious lens (exegesis) has generated distinct memories and distinct identities for the three nations with a common past?

The analysis of school history textbooks as sites of the official historical narrative reveals that exegesis impacted official histories by making them distinct despite the common past. This was achieved by the states by re-examining key junctures of the national past through a religious lens, translating events in the past into religious understandings of inter-state relationships, and reinterpreting history as a religious struggle to achieve sovereignty of religious states to secure religious communities, especially in the case of Pakistan, and to a lesser extent in case of India and Bangladesh. However, all three nations' history textbooks eulogized a particular founding father through repeated (religious) salutations or pictorial representations to emphasize the religious ideals of the person and their significance in connecting the nation's past with its modern identity.

Overall, while religion can only provide overarching guidelines or commandments to the borderless believers, exegesis enables states to reinterpret religion as a state history, thus allowing states to demarcate who is "us" and "them" within and beyond national territories. In other words, exegesis allows the creation of bordered communities, bound by a particular constitution and form of government, in a way that differentiates these communities from other groups of people in another state with the same religion by the creation of exegesis-defined national identities.

The analysis of history textbooks and the particular version of the past being officiated as national history also reveals how exegesis impacts national narratives about history and national destiny. Exegesis allows states to form a national narrative that allows the narration of state history which even precedes the formation or existence of the states. In other words, the exegesis-defined official history provides the illusion that the state unofficially existed in the minds of the illuminated political elite much before it was established. The exegesis then offers a

level-playing field to state-prescribed history textbooks to aim at securing patriotic future generations who believe and can work towards the project of the nations.

However, since exegesis as an exercise in South Asia was conducted by individual states with varying degrees of emphasis on religion, the narrower the exegesis, the closer it aimed to securitize religious communities and antagonize other religious minorities within and beyond state borders. This was particularly the case with Pakistan's textbooks as well as its national policy on curriculum or education, where exegesis of Islam was done to chart a hard line of differentiation between Muslims and non-Muslims, the latter was often referred to as detrimental to the former. For India and Bangladesh, the exegesis was additionally the foundation of justifying the need to identify and coexist with religious minorities. However, Indian textbooks evaded several events related to common history with its neighbors, by rather focusing on the exegesis of Hindu civilization to highlight differences between Indian and European nationalism. Bangladesh textbooks, on the other hand, represented a context between the state as a Muslim-majority Bengalee nation, and the constraints of the secularist identity it afforded through a broader exegesis of Islam which sees non-Muslims as different, and even spiritually less conscious but representative of the nation.

Exegesis, on the question of national destiny, does not offer an independent and concrete direction, but only indicates the direction of state policy based on perceptions of history. For instance, the inter-state rivalry between India and Pakistan over Kashmir is viewed as a territorial conflict. However, an exegetical comparison of the two states reveals a problem of religion and history, whereas territorial conflict is an outcome of this divergent exegetical understanding. In Indian official history, Kashmir is the cradle of Hindu civilization, and in recent history, an amalgamation of different religious traditions, thus intrinsically tied to India. In Pakistan's

official history, Kashmir represents Muslims under Hindu rule (the textbooks mention Hindu and India interchangeably), first under the Hindu king, and now as part of a Hindu-majority neighboring state. The territorial conflict in Kashmir can be seen as an extension of the need to defend the religious territory that ties it to the nation. Exegesis does not offer a policy solution but indicates the reason behind the conflict- a necessary step to identify reasons for conflict intensification and recalibrate neighborhood policy for regional peace.

Similarly, there is less consensus between Bangladesh and Pakistan over the 1971 war crimes and the perpetrators of the War. Bangladeshi history acknowledges the national trauma of the 1971 War, wherein the Pakistani Army victimized Bengalees and conducted targeted genocide of the Hindu Bengalee population. However, in Pakistan's history, West Pakistan was the victim of Hindus (Indians) for instigating a partition of the two wings of Pakistan, and the army action was a necessary step to restore law and order. As an outcome, the problems of history are unsettled national traumas derived from an exegesis-heavy understanding of the past.

This awareness can provide a pathway for policy course correction as well as a reconciliation of histories toward regional peace. The history textbook analysis also revealed that through eulogizing particular exegesis-inspired political ideologies and personalities, while there was an impact on national official histories, exegesis in no way confirms that the official history of states is unchangeable. Rather, like different exegeses might impact and re-narrate the past, states might choose their histories over time as well.

7.5. Exegesis as foundation to secularism(s) and 'imagined communities'

2.2. What conflicts/convergences in post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, are caused by religion?

The three neighboring states of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have been battling the conundrum of the definition as well as the implementation of secularism. While religious minorities do exist in these nations, the subsistence and progress of these communities depend on how far a state can accommodate religious-cultural diversity. However, a state-church separation for achieving ideal secularism has never been part of the political imaginary of these nations. That evokes the following sub-questions: how has religion impacted the post-colonial secularist identities of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh? But also, and more importantly, how do these three states understand, define, and envision their secularisms?

Application of exegesis to the post-colonial partition of South Asia revealed the likelihood of conceptually addressing state anxieties amid huge refugee crises, religious riots, and the necessity of defining and securing the 'self' of newly independent nation-states. Exegesis, when understood as a solution to the ontological security threat, also opened the possibility of defining and comparing varied understandings of state-specific secularism(s) in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. The analysis through exegesis offered a reinterpretation of religion as a hegemonic discourse on the history of these states. While these states chose modern state apparatus, underpinned by secularism, a long colonial struggle, and interreligious conflict, without an accompanying process of adopting a secular identity, left these states seeking past roots to narrate a continuous national history that could connect the past with an envisioned

future. Thus, while ontological security was a rational state objective, exegesis was the enabler of this objective for states to perform creative history-telling and identity-creation.

Religion, thus, became the linchpin of the "imagined communities" carved into states. The modern South Asian states 'read' and 'interpreted' religions differently, conducting distinct exegeses of religions, which is observable in how they constitutionally define and implement secularism. Since secular principles were imposed in independent India and Pakistan to cosmetically solve long-standing religious animosity and widespread riots, rather than organically letting it emerge through social consensus, secularism was viewed as incompatible in its Western form. Consequently, the secularism(s) in these nations do not approach the Western secularism of strict state-religion separation, but in fact, are defined by exegesis and thus continue to consolidate political power for certain religions.

The selected case studies presented very distinct secularisms. The absence of a state religion and the presence of secular principles in the constitution does distinguish India from its other two immediate neighbors but does not indicate an absence of exegesis. Indian secularism has two main components: *sarva dharma sambhava* representing Gandhian ideals of equability of all faiths, but more importantly, *panthnirpeksha* which is a Hindi translation for secular meaning neutrality/non-biasedness of state among different *panth* or denominations of religions. In a way, Indian secularism considers only the Dharmic religions, i.e., Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism (and their offshoots) as *dharma*, while other faiths exogenous to the civilization are considered religions with different denominations. One outcome of this definition is the differential judicial interference in Dharmic religions, while constitutional protections are provided, in certain aspects, to other religions. It has also created more differences among

religious communities within the states, that sometimes identify more with their co-religionists beyond state territories.

The state of Pakistan was established to protect Islamic principles and thus holds *Allah* as the sovereign. There are provisions for religious freedom, but the imposition of Islam by the state has been constitutionalized, leading to several conflicts among minority religious communities in Pakistan with majority Islamic ones. Strict, exegesis-defined boundaries of state Islam also exclude Ahmadiyya Muslims who continue to be persecuted and attacked in Pakistan alongside Sikhs, Hindus, and Christians, who are all classified as non-Muslims by the state.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, also has a state religion, Islam, but has toyed with instating and removing 'secularism' from its constitution. Bangladeshi secularism is termed *Dharma Nirapekshata* which puts focus on outlawing communalism. However, Bangladeshi secularism conflicts with the state religion, reflecting a negotiation between the two as the state seeks ontological security through religious identity despite the adoption of modern and state-specific secularism.

The study of ontological security threats for newly independent nations in South Asia revealed a crucial observation through analysis. The implication for the scholarship on ontological security is that exegesis can be a potent concept that can assist in further studying religion, and its distinct interpretations by states. It can explain why and how states that share the same religious majority or have the same official religion, can generate different understandings of the 'self', consequently acting differently in regional and global politics. Moreover, by combining the study on religion, secularism, and ontological security, the analysis attempted to contribute to the discussion on how not only colonial experiences but decolonization and

establishment of secular states were also seen as a rupture of self-identity by religious communities driven by exegesis.

The impacts of religion on ontological (in)security is another important avenue for further research in the field of ontological security dealing with the cases of peace-building in conflict-ridden states. As demonstrated by the chapter, the same factor, i.e., exegesis as an exercise conducted by ontological security-seeking states, can cause ontological insecurity too and can have implications on how these states deal with material power and foreign policy. While beyond the scope of this research, there can be implications for states seeking collective ontological security through international religious organizations such as the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Is significant similarity in state exegesis a pre-condition for inter-state cooperation in matters related to religious engagement? Do distinct (or conflicting) exegeses by states in an institution such as the OIC adversely impact cooperative mechanisms? More research is required to explore, expand and establish evidence-based research on ontological security intersecting religion and international relations.

Overall, exegesis explains why and how religion was allowed to define and dictate secularism as a solution to the problem of religious conflicts. The concept of exegesis also helps compare and contrast the distinct understandings of secularism in South Asian states with a different or same state religion. However, more research is necessary to determine if the concept applies to other religious-civilizational cases as well, such as in the Middle East, or South-East Asia. Moreover, while exegesis helps identify and explain how religion operates and how it impacts domestic politics, in the context of secularism, it does not offer solutions to the problem of religion, since the objective of the concept is to unveil and identify, but not resolve.

7.6. Exegesis as faith-based diplomacy and foreign policy

2.3.   *How has religion manifested in foreign policies? How that, in turn, has impacted*

regional/inter-state security architecture in South Asia?

Chapter 6 of the research investigated how religion has been studied as an explanatory factor in foreign policy. The key observation from the reviewed literature on religion and foreign policy linkages was that religion in domestic politics was understood as a background to foreign policy thinking, but not a component of foreign policy. But these studies left underexplained the link between religion as both, a precursor to and a component of foreign policy.

This research proposed that for religion to be a precursor to and a component of foreign policy, the following conditions are important:

i.   defining what religion means for analysis, such that the definition preserves religion's temporal component, rather than dismissing it altogether for its supernatural component.

ii.   allowing religion to be part of foreign policy thinking, as opposed to restricting it to only domestic politics.

iii.   religion does not depend on particular non-state actors to be part of foreign policy but could operate as part of the agenda of state actors, non-state actors, or even as part of national identities, where its presence cannot be negated.

iv.   allowing for religion and foreign policy to be part of a diachronic international system, where something sacred as religion does not indicate a static foreign policy

but is allowed to operate alongside other factors resulting in changes in foreign policymaking.

Religion, besides being an obscure term that does not even fit all faiths, is also too vast to be reduced into a concept that can be traced in decision-making. However, exegesis, which reinterprets religion as the hegemonic discourses on both history and identity, permits the establishment of the link between religion and foreign policy in the diachronic international system. Assuming a state to be a rational entity, the exegesis provides a worldview as well as distinct history and identity for the state.

Religion through exegesis then finds more concrete significance in a state's decision-making when states prioritize their worldview and also seek the preservation of the national history and identity by essentializing the state's existence, i.e., its sovereignty and security. Here, security encompasses both, physical security (national borders) and intangible aspects (national identities or history).

Thus, exegesis operates in foreign policy in two ways: religion in foreign policy (the presence of religion is not necessary, but it acts as a useful means to fulfill another objective) and religious foreign policy (religion becomes an end in itself, laying down objectives for the states and assuming a central position within the state sovereignty and security definition).

Figure 6 below summarizes and illustrates how religion, through exegesis, impacts domestic politics and foreign policy, leading to two major foreign policy outcomes: religion in foreign policy; and religious foreign policy.
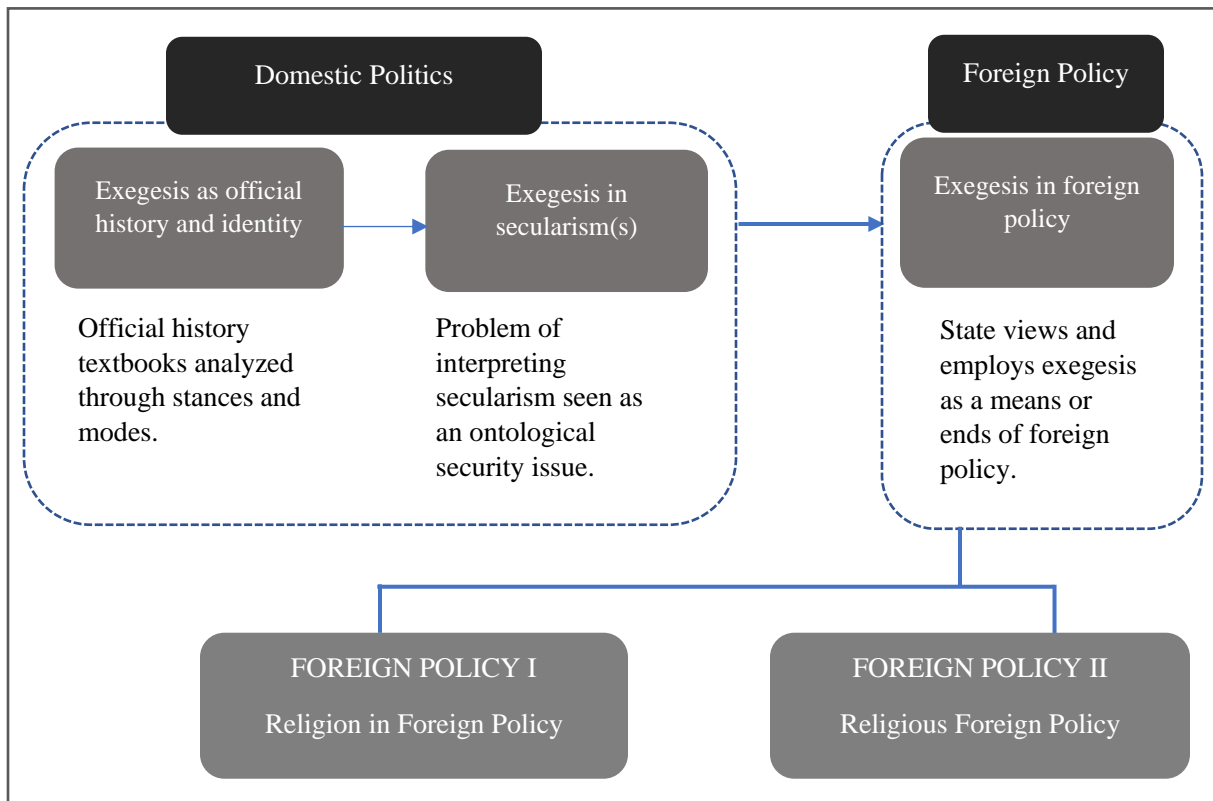
Figure 6 Exegesis in NCR: Impact of religion through exegesis on domestic politics and foreign policy.

Source: Prepared by the author.

In the case of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, the prominence of religion in dictating the course of their identity, resulted in a domestic policy emphasizing the securitization of religious identities, however, in terms of foreign policy it translated into asserting 'sacred borders', i.e., national territories viewed as a crucial component of religious identity. However, exegesis revealed different objectives and outcomes of foreign policy, depending on where religion was incorporated into policymaking or decision-making by a state. Exegesis operating as 'religion in foreign policy' was reflected in pilgrimage diplomacy, which was a foreign policy employed in India and Pakistan towards allowing free passage for pilgrims of the minority religions in

neighboring states to visit religious sites across the border. Exegesis was less prominent as a strict reinterpretation of religion and took up a harmonious view for achieving the state objective of peacebuilding. As an outcome, a bridge was created on 'sacred territories' and made national borders porous. While these inter-state policies were also aimed at a cultural exchange that saw pilgrimage diplomacy as an effective measure to ease religious tensions, they were very weak and were not implemented with full vigor by the states. Moreover, the failure of these policies in the long term indicated that religion in foreign policy would be ineffective unless they addressed the core issues of religious animosity such that the benefits would reach the intended religious communities.

On the other hand, when exegesis operated in decision-making as a 'religious foreign policy', it implied the assertion of religious identity to establish its hegemonic discourse on history. Religious foreign policies were crafted as solutions to the problem of religious animosity, as well as a response to the persecution of religious communities of interest, in neighboring states. An example of this foreign policy is the immigration or refugee policies, or the CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) in India which sees maltreatment of non-Muslims in neighboring Muslim nations as a key reason behind the necessity to protect them and expedite their Indian citizenship. Vested Property Act/ Enemy Property Act in Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively were also instances of this policy that viewed emigrated Hindu or other religious communities as enemies of the Muslim states, whose land (assets) could be seized by the state. These policies also served as a signal of disapproval by these Muslim-majority states toward their neighbors, for their treatment of religious (Muslim) minorities and their faith-based domestic politics. The outcome of these state actions and policies was an intensification of regional tension, emphasis on state traumas over regional cooperation, and cumulative trust

deficit causing regional instability. This foreign policy also failed to resolve the problem of religion-based conflict.

Again, as discussed in previous sections, exegesis as a concept demystifies how religion operates at two levels in foreign policy: on one level, as a component functioning as a means for another state objective, and on another level, as an end in itself such that religion-based objectives take priority in foreign policy. However, exegesis cannot predict foreign policy outcomes. It can only indicate the probable outcomes of a certain foreign policy, depending on how religion was instrumentalized and what the larger state objective is. But since exegesis does not provide a decisive characteristic of religions as more or less inclusive, or more or less restrictive, etc., the concept does not conclude the most ideal foreign policy to resolve religion-based conflicts or the best uniform policy option for a state to positively employ religion in decision-making for conflict resolution objective. This leaves space for further research on not only the concept of exegesis, but also on its applicability to a variety of research related to religion and foreign policy, or religion in international relations, in general. The next section proposes some of these avenues for further research.

7.7. Avenues for Further Research

This dissertation aimed at offering a concept, exegesis that can help operationalize religion in IR theory. Among the limitations of this research acknowledged in previous sections, this research locates within the larger IR theoretical framework of neo-classical realism, implying that religious theories of international relations were not considered sufficient to

explain the presence of religions in global politics. One reason for this is that scholarship in the field has not been able to come to a consensus over whether all religions are the same and if a religious theory of IR focusing on one religious worldview would be applicable to other religious worldviews as well. More research is required to conclusively propose and establish religious IR theories.

Another limitation of this research is that it focuses on South Asia, particularly three populous states, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The scope of this research is thus limited to these nations. However, the study can be replicated to analyze other regions such as the Middle East (for instance, United Arab Emirates-Saudi Arabia-Israel relations). The same framework of analysis can be expanded to study Latin America, Africa, and Europe to make sense of the rise of religion, as well as the interaction of other religions in these regions. Such a study may uncover more nuanced differences in state exegesis despite the dominance of a single religion in the entire region, namely, Islam in the Middle East, Orthodox/Catholic Christianity in South America, and Protestants/Catholics in Europe. As noted earlier, exegesis can challenge inter-state relations in a seemingly homogeneous region with a shared past and can impact how nations differentiate amongst themselves, make cordial relations or mark rivalries based on an exegesis-derived understanding of social, cultural, or political practices in other nations. Eventually, such research projects would aim to challenge the established secular IR and make space for other factors such as religion, secularism, etc. to enhance the explanatory power of new and existing IR theories and enrich the discipline with creative and quality research.

A deep examination of the impact of exegesis on state policies, national identities, and the status of religion in a nation reveals not only *how* a state thinks, but also *how* a state decides policies and interacts with other states. Exegesis can prove to be a useful analytical tool that

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allows a deeper inquiry into the strategic character of states that might not only have a very dominant religion, and yet, might be guided by a framework based on an ethnoreligious identity, religious-civilizational identity, or a religious-cultural identity. A sense of *who* a state identifies with (and *who* it wants to be), can have an impact on how a state decides to narrate its history and project that history onto its present policy or future course of action. This was more evident in the analysis of school history textbooks that were instruments of communicating official history to future generations. For further research, an analysis of not only history textbooks, but also the textbooks at higher levels of education, combined with student interaction, can be undertaken to reveal not only how a state narrates its past (top-down), but also how youth grasps and interprets state exegesis (bottom-up).

Another potential avenue for further research regarding official histories is how the states interact with each other's exegesis. The basis of this research question is an assumption that, unlike going into the clash of civilizations framework, which assumes inherent confrontation amongst different civilizations, religions, or cultures, religions in fact, need not be confrontational. As has been observed in this dissertation, while two states with different religious affiliations can cooperate, two states with the same state religion can also have confrontational policies towards each other. Culture or ethnicity alone does not entirely explain the rivalry for the latter; for example, exegesis in the case of Pakistan and Bangladesh revealed a very different understanding of the 'self', official history, and state religion. For Pakistan, the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim identity has been constitutionalized, while for Bangladesh, Islam can accommodate secularism in the constitution despite the inherent contradictions in terms of the definition of secularism and implementation of the same. Thus, exegesis can also be a useful tool in two ways, while studying state behavior and policies. One,

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exegesis evades any biased view of the religion by the researcher; it allows the sacred to remain sacred while only dealing with how states interpret religions as a historical discourse. This is useful especially when dealing with religious conflict, terrorism as a state foreign policy, and potential threats to regional security in a region with certain clashing religious identities. Second, exegesis permits more attention to modern states that not only are making efforts towards strengthening democracy and human rights through religious diplomacy but also state efforts towards furthering regional peace and harmonious co-existence, as outcomes of state exegesis of a certain religion. When a state decides to speak peace to conflict through an interpretation of religion as its ethically appropriate policy, it opens the way to study exegesis in international relations in the context of conflict resolution, mutual dialogues, reconciliation of history, and regional trust-building.

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