

Book Review

The New Cold War: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State

By Mark Juergensmeyer. Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1993, 202 pp.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, which resulted in the demise of the former bipolar system in international relations, has led writers to offer predictions about the future framework of international political relationships. Francis Fukuyama posits the end of history as a result of the end of the cold war. Samuel Huntington speculates that the post-cold war world will be divided according to differences in civilizations: a "clash of civilizations." Unlike Huntington, Mark Juergensmeyer argues that any future conflict will have a religious nature. Huntington predicts that the struggle will occur on the international level, whereas Juergensmeyer says it will take place on the nation-state level, for religious nationalism will challenge the dominant secular ideology that now rules nation-states.

Before proceeding, two important elements asserted by Juergensmeyer should be kept in mind: the conflict between secular nationalism and religious nationalism will take place in the Third World and will be confined to the borders of the nation-state. In other words, Islamic movements will not be united and their concern will be limited to their respective countries. Based on these assertions, we can assume that the West will remain secular and unthreatened by religious revolts, and that the conflict may develop from the national to the international level (i.e., between western secular states and nonwestern nation-states dominated by religious groups).

The book is based on interviews conducted by the author with leaders of various religious groups and an analysis of their writings. Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and Jewish movements are studied. In the first chapter, "The Loss of Faith in Secular Nationalism," the author examines the emergence of nationalism in the Third World through the works of Hans Kohn and Donald Smith. The main theme here is the religious rejection of secular nationalism. He asserts that secular nationalists are perceived by religious nationalists as partners in a western-led global conspiracy against religion:

An example occurred in 1991 during the Gulf War: Islamic political groups in Egypt reversed their initial condemnation of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait when the United States sent thousands of

troops to defend Kuwait. These groups then felt it necessary to defend Saddam Hussein against the sinister plotting of the United States. (p. 22)

While it is true that the Islamists in Egypt changed their position, Juergensmeyer fails to recognize that the change was not in defense of Saddam Hussein. Rather, American intervention was seen as a tool that could lead to further destruction of Muslim lands and peoples beyond Kuwait. The Islamists desired an Islamic, not a western, solution.

Chapter 2, "Competing Ideologies of Order," reviews the development of secular nationalism. The main question posed is whether religion can accommodate the nation-state. The author argues that according to Sinhalese Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Hindu nationalists in India, religion, and not secular nationalism, is the appropriate ground on which to build a modern nation-state. In chapter 3, "Models of Religious Revolution: The Middle East," a brief history of various Islamic movements in different Muslim countries is presented. Juergensmeyer attempts to answer various questions arising from debate in the West, such as whether the Iranian revolution will serve as a model for other Muslim states, especially Egypt. He reassures the West that what happened in Iran could not be repeated in Egypt, due to the differences in religious sects: "Sunni Muslims have neither the theological nor the organizational connection to politics the Shi'ites do, nor has Egypt had the same pattern of suppression of Islam that Iran has had." A thorough analysis of Sunni political thought by Juergensmeyer may have changed his understanding of various Sunni scholars' views on revolution. Also, it must be noted that the author makes a serious error, or possibly just a typing mistake, when he mentions that the nationalist party in Algeria has ruled since 1956 (at that time Algeria was still struggling for independence).

Chapter 4, devoted to religious movements in South Asia, describes the conflict between Sikhs and Hindu nationalists in India and the continuing conflict in Sri Lanka. The fifth chapter examines the rise of Islamic nationalism in post-Soviet Central Asia, while chapter 6 discusses whether there is a special relationship between religion and violence. The author argues that every religion has its share of violent and bloody incidents:

The savage martyrdom of Husain in Shi'ite Islam, the crucifixion of Jesus in Christianity, the sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur in Sikhism, the bloody conquests detailed in the Hebrew Bible, the terrible battles celebrated in the Hindu epics, and the religious wars described in the Sinhalese Buddhist Pali Chronicles—all these events indicate that in virtually every religious tradition images of violence occupy a central place. (pp. 153-4)

One of the most important conclusions of this chapter is the idea that violent religious nationalist movements will cause marginal groups to rise to power. For example, the Iranian revolution was and remains controlled by clerics who had no prior experience in politics. This marginal group, Juergensmeyer maintains, will be the one that controls power after the victory of religious-nationalist movements.

In the seventh chapter, the author discusses democracy, human rights, and the modern religious state. He admits that the problem of minority rights and identities are not associated only with religious nationalists, for even secular societies and governments have been struggling with these issues. In his conclusion, Juergensmeyer asks if the West can live with religious nationalism. He compiles two lists of those characteristics of religious nationalism that the West might face. The first one features those that are unacceptable: the "potential for demagoguery and dictatorship, the tendency to satanize the United States and to loathe Western civilization, and the potential to become violent and intolerant." The second list includes those that are acceptable: such important elements as "religious nationalists' appreciation of tradition and historical rootedness, and their insistence on grounding public institutions in morality."

This book raises important issues in trying to predict the nature of future conflicts in the world. However, because it tried to cover almost every major religion and sect in a small number of pages, the resulting analysis is shallow. A concentrated study of Islamic movements in the Muslim world, or on just one religion, would have been more beneficial.

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