

Second Edition

GOVERNMENT and POLITICS in SOUTH ASIA

Craig Baxter, Yogendra K. Malik,
Charles H. Kennedy, and
Robert C. Oberst

Westview Press



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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In the four years since the first edition of this book was published, there have been a number of major changes in South Asia. These have included the defeat of the Rajiv Gandhi government in India, the death of Zia-ul-Haq and the coming to power and subsequent dismissal of Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, the changing of the guard in Sri Lanka, and the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan as well as the many events that are important even if less likely to draw worldwide headlines.

We have, therefore, felt that a second edition of the work is necessary. In preparing this edition we have followed the pattern described in the preface to the first edition in that the book is a collective effort although each author had specific responsibilities.

We wish to add our thanks to Susan McEachern of Westview Press with whom we have worked cordially and successfully in bringing out this new edition.

Craig Baxter
Yogendra K. Malik
Charles H. Kennedy
Robert C. Oberst

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

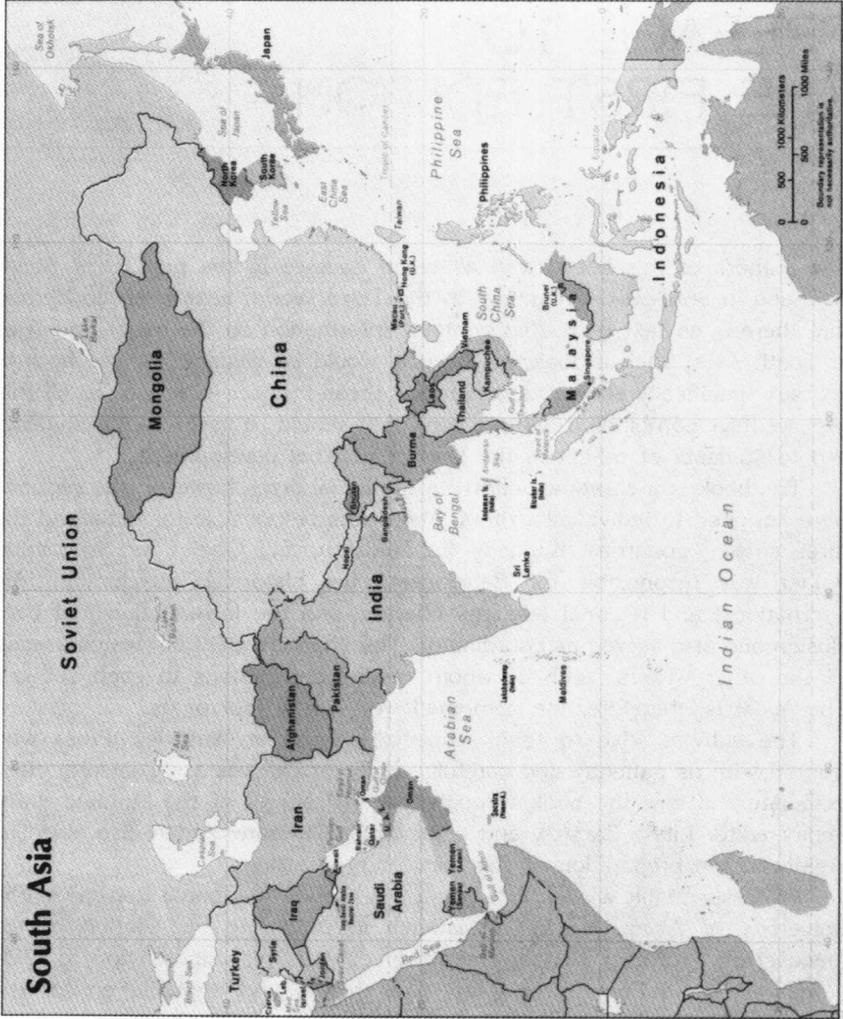
The authors of this book, who all teach courses in the politics of South Asia and in political development in the Third World, have been concerned that there is no text book that contains information on the major countries of South Asia. Such a book, we believe, would be valuable for use both in courses specifically about the region and those broader in scope. To fill this gap, we have combined to write a book that should be useful to our students and to students of others in the field of political development.

The book is a combined effort. In the initial draft, however, the sections were assigned to individual writers. Malik was responsible for India and the three smaller countries, Kennedy for Pakistan, and Oberst for Sri Lanka. Baxter was responsible for Bangladesh, the historical introduction, the international and regional relations chapter, and the introduction and conclusion and also served as coordinator. The chapters were circulated among all the other writers, each of whom made contributions to each section. The result is, therefore, the combined work of all four of us.

The authors wish to thank especially those at Westview Press who worked with us patiently and carefully. Holly Arrow was a particularly close associate and saw the book through the final stages of the ultimate draft. Senior editor Libby Barstow and copy editor Christine Arden also aided us greatly in the preparation of the text for typesetting.

Professor Malik wishes to express his thanks to Bonnie Ralston of the University of Akron for her assistance in preparing his section of the manuscript; Professor Kennedy similarly extends his appreciation to Elide Vargas of Wake Forest University. Our thanks and appreciation for the patience of our wives is shown in the dedication of this work to them.

*C.B.
Y.K.M.
C.H.K.
R.C.O.*



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INTRODUCTION

Should South Asia be a subject for study? Can we effectively survey an area remote from our Western experiences, one with a new vocabulary of politics and society coupled with unfamiliar names (many of them seemingly unpronounceable)? Is it appropriate for those of us from such prosperous nations as the United States and Canada, which are at the center of world affairs, to study nations that are poverty stricken and, it often appears, far from the mainstream of international activity?

Each of these questions must be answered in the affirmative, for several reasons. The size of the region's population is perhaps the most important consideration. A second consideration is the rising importance of the region's contribution to the productive capacity of the world. South Asia's location alone makes it strategically important. Further, the region provides examples of different forms of political development ranging from the open and democratic—but not entirely perfect—systems of India and Sri Lanka to the frequently authoritarian governments of Pakistan and Bangladesh and to the changing traditional polities of Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. In addition, the wide range of political development examples in a compact area permits comparison among the seven countries and between South Asia and other developing nations.

With respect to population size, the region contained over 1 billion people in mid-1987.¹ According to estimates published by the World Bank, this number will increase to almost 2 billion by the year 2025, meaning that more than one-fifth of the world's people will live in South Asia. On this basis alone the region cannot be disregarded; indeed, it must be looked upon as one of the key areas of the world.

In 1987, India ranked twelfth in terms of annual gross national product (GNP). When the relatively much smaller economies of the other six countries were taken into account as well, the collective GNP of South Asia was more than one-quarter trillion dollars. Excluding the communist nations, for which comparable data is not available in World Bank reporting, India ranked third—behind China and the United States—in value added in agriculture. Further, the growth in the GNPs of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka

exceeded the average growth of all low-income economies during the period 1973–1983, although, admittedly, this growth occurred in each case from a much smaller base than that of India. Nonetheless, in constant dollars the collective GNP of the seven nations will exceed a half-trillion dollars by 2000 if past rates of growth are approximated in the next ten years.

In the chapters that follow, these data will be amplified to show where growth has taken place and is expected to take place in the future as the South Asian nations work toward greater economic development and the provision of a better standard of living for their people.

When the nations of the Third World (the developing nations) are considered, it is clear that the attention of the West is riveted on the Middle East and perhaps on Latin America and East Asia. Nonetheless, the location of South Asia is important to the West and to Japan. The air and sea routes that connect Europe and the Middle East with the Far East and Australasia pass through or near the subcontinent that we call South Asia. India borders China along the Himalayas. Pakistan plays host to more than 3 million Afghan refugees as the civil war in neighboring Afghanistan continues despite the Soviet withdrawal of its troops. Pakistan also forms the eastern flank of the vital Middle East with its oil riches, and several countries of South Asia supply significant (though now decreasing) numbers of workers to the labor-poor Middle East. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka look both to South Asia and to Southeast Asia for trade and cultural ties. It was not without reason that Pakistan, which then included Bangladesh, was the link member of the Central Treaty Organization and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, nor is it insignificant that both the United States and the Soviet Union have greatly increased naval presence in the Indian Ocean in the past two decades.

For almost two centuries South Asia was under the domination of Great Britain, as the Indian Empire, the Crown Colony of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and the protectorates over Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives. The defense of South Asia and the mediation of disputes among various parts of the region were the concerns of Whitehall and of Calcutta and New Delhi. The withdrawal of British power in 1947 and 1948 left the region without an umpire, so to speak—not that an umpire would have been welcome, although such a figure could have settled or at least postponed some disputes. Nevertheless, each of the four major states has kept in place many of the institutional structures inherited from the British—structures that have contributed significantly to stability and continuity, especially in the administrative system. Parliamentary institutions have not fared as well in Pakistan and Bangladesh as in India and Sri Lanka.

South Asia has been slow to set up regional institutions and has only recently done so on a limited basis, such that political and bilateral issues have been excluded from the purview of the South Asian Association for

Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The issue of regional cooperation will be explored in Chapter 31; then, in the conclusion, some of the reasons for the failure of the continuance of the British heritage in domestic politics will be considered.

The routes taken toward political, social, and economic development by the nations of South Asia have diverged widely. Three major religious systems—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam—each one dominant in one or more of the nations, account for part, often a major part, of the political culture of the nation concerned. Two of these systems, Hinduism and Buddhism, are indigenous to the region, while the third, Islam, has had a major impact for almost a millenium. These religious systems, along with other important aspects of the social systems—for example, the caste system, which is inherent in Hinduism—provide a traditional basis for the political system that is only partly offset by the later accretions from the British period. The study of the mix of traditional and modern is one of the most important aspects of the study of politics and society in these seven nations.

Of special interest in this study are the variations in political development as measured by structural differentiation and cultural secularization in each political system. These two keys to modernization are thus investigated in relation to each of the countries of South Asia. A society that makes many and varied demands on its political system requires also that the system contain sufficiently specialized (or differentiated) structures, both governmental and nongovernmental, to provide the means to place and aggregate those demands as well as to respond to them with authoritative decisions. In addition, a modern society requires that the demands be answered by decisions that are made on a rational or secular basis using data that are as objective as possible. In our discussion of the South Asian nations, secularism is taken to mean rationalism—that is, the knowledge that people, through their own initiative, are able to modify the environment in which they live. Secularism does *not* mean the absence of religion (or of ideology, for that matter), for religion is a key ingredient of the political cultures in which the political systems must operate. Moreover, the political cultures themselves are neither stagnant nor static, for they tend to change along with the societies of which they are a part.²

Both the culture and the political system have much to do with the degree of the autonomy experienced by the nongovernmental structures in the system. For instance, India and Sri Lanka, though generally open polities (e.g., the press in both countries has usually, but not always, been free), have undergone periods of limitation of autonomy.

Each of the states of South Asia faces five critical areas of political development: nation building, state building, participation, economy building, and distribution. (1) Although India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka inherited fairly

effective state apparatuses, they are facing difficult challenges in the process of building unified nations. These challenges include the problems pertaining to the Sikhs and Kashmiris in India, the Sindhis in Pakistan, and the Tamils in Sri Lanka. (2) Economy building is, of course, another difficult challenge for the Third World nations, and those of South Asia are no exception. (3) Periodic and free elections, an important form of participation in India and Sri Lanka, are not regularly available to the people of the other states. Finally, (4) the distribution of resources in each of the nations is badly skewed; moreover, steps being taken to remedy this problem lack uniformity among the seven countries.

In the chapters that follow, we shall look first at the political heritage of the British past (Chapter 1) and then at each of the countries. The four largest countries are dealt with in Parts 1 through 4: Part 1, India; Part 2, Pakistan; Part 3, Bangladesh; and Part 4, Sri Lanka. The three smallest countries—Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives—are considered together in Chapter 30. Chapter 31 reveals the interrelationships among the seven states in the region and the roles they play in the international system. Finally, the conclusion ties the threads together in a discussion of the political development of the region as a whole.

Notes

1. Data in this introduction are taken from the annex to World Bank, *World Development Report, 1989* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

2. The concepts used in this paragraph and the following one are developed from Gabriel A. Almond and G. Bingham Powell, Jr., *Comparative Politics: System, Process and Policy*, 2d ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978).

1

THE GOVERNANCE OF SOUTH ASIA UNDER THE BRITISH

Newly independent nations do not spring into the world as did Athena from the head of Zeus. Instead they bring to their new status a baggage of traditional and changing societal patterns, an economic infrastructure that often may be classed as “less developed,” and a political system that is usually at least partially modeled on that of the colonial power from which independence has been won. In the chapters that follow, the political and social systems for each of the South Asian nations will be discussed separately. In this introductory chapter, to set the background for political change, we will briefly sketch the system of British colonial rule before 1947 in India and before 1948 in Sri Lanka (then called Ceylon). The British Indian Empire embraced the area that is now the independent republics of India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, the territory that is now the independent nation of Sri Lanka was governed as a “crown colony,” and the relationship between Great Britain and the smaller nations of Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives was something approaching a “protectorate.” Although each pattern must be looked at separately, the bulk of this chapter pertains to the British Indian Empire. Shorter descriptions of the Crown Colony of Ceylon and the three smaller countries follow.

British Expansion: The Dual System of “States” and “British India”

The British were not the first Europeans to arrive in India and to begin to set up trading stations (called “factories”—places where “factoring,” a rather antiquated term for trading, took place). Beginning with the circumnavigation of Africa by the Portuguese Vasco da Gama in 1498 and the establishment of the first Portuguese station at Cochin on the southwestern coast of India in 1506, other Europeans, particularly the French, Dutch,

and British, began to follow the Portuguese example and establish stations along the Indian coast.

In 1600, the British East India Company was chartered in London to carry out British trade with India and the East. The Company was given a monopoly over trade between India and British territory—as will be recalled from descriptions of the Boston Tea Party of 1773. The right of the Company to govern came almost by accident. As the British began to establish their factories (the first at Surat, north of Bombay, in 1612), some form of administration and protection became necessary; these matters came to be the responsibility of the Company. The Indian territories directly controlled by Britain as well as the princely states subordinate to the British eventually came under the authority of the Company. Its Indian headquarters were located in Calcutta until 1858, when the Company was dissolved and its powers were transferred to the Crown (a legalism referring to the British government).

When the British and the other Europeans arrived in India, the major local power was the Mughal empire. This empire did not control all of the subcontinent; several independent Hindu kingdoms remained in the southern part. But the bulk of northern India from Afghanistan to Bengal and as far south as the Deccan plateau was under Mughal rule. The Mughals were the latest in a series of Muslim dynasties to rule northern India beginning in the eleventh century.

Mughal rule began when Babur, the first of the dynasty, defeated a declining Delhi sultanate in 1526 at Panipat. Babur and his five successors have been described as the “Great Mughals” because they expanded and retained power in the areas mentioned above. The greatest of these was Akbar (who reigned from 1556 to 1605), but the empire began to decline after the death of the sixth emperor, Aurangzeb, in 1707. The empire technically continued to exist until 1858, although it was under British domination for most of its last century and a half. It was the Mughals who set up a major aspect of the administrative system that the British would follow later: the division of the territory into provinces (*subas*) and districts (*zillas*). The Mughals also provided a framework for British rule in Bengal inasmuch as the British rulers initially operated, at least *de jure*, under the aegis of a grant of power from the emperor.

British expansion occurred not steadily but in spurts, by a process that has been described as gaining an empire in a fit of absent-mindedness. Madras became the principal seat of British presence in 1639; Bombay was acquired in 1661 as part of the dowry brought by the Portuguese wife of Charles II; and Calcutta became a station in 1690. It was from these three major sites that British expansion would take place. The power of Portugal declined during the seventeenth century until that nation was left with three small enclaves along the western coast (Goa, Daman, and Diu), which were