

Irreversibility of the Religious-Political Union: A Dichotomy?

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The interwoven mosaic of Sri Lankan society, in which religion and politics have been closely intertwined, has resulted in an irreversible socially-accepted entity. Considered more of a norm, this union, it could be contested is one of opportunity, yet the social fabric has come to embody, to an extent, this assimilation. Irrespective of the person, party or popular belief, the need for the inclusion of the religious with that pertaining to governance and state, is a given aspect today. Across the political spectrum notwithstanding the faith, the reliance on and adherence to one's belief becomes an integral part of the politics practiced. Or so it is continuously claimed and attempted to be perpetually portrayed. Similarly the religious hierarchy provides counsel and guidance, even interfering, in the state apparatus, all of which however takes place within a relatively well-created and mostly well-defined space. This paper argues that while this irreversible union, attributed mainly to the socio-cultural dimension, has been apparently carved in stone, it is however a dichotomy as that which is truly preached through religion is never practiced in politics and that which is practiced is by and large in contradiction to that which was preached. From an International Relations perspective, the revival of the debate between Idealism and Realism is brought to fruition as the religious-political union, though accepted as inherent in the state structure, is, it is argued at odds with each other. The subsequent clash that occurs, within this union, is mostly smothered over, as practitioners on either side of the divide refuse to accept or remain sublimely ignorant. This paper thus attempts to raise and respond to the question of how such a union exists. Why are adherents so keen to portray a supposed union? Isn't the difference greater than the commonality? More relevantly, does a union actually exist, when reflected upon from a theoretical/theological perspective? Is opportunity the prime objective?