

# In Memoriam

## Paul R. Brass

Rarely has a scholar made such monumental contributions to both the theoretical and area-studies literature in political science and South Asian studies as Paul R. Brass, who passed away in his home near Seattle, Washington on May 31, 2022. Professor Brass helped define the field of Indian politics and ethnicity/nationalism in his five-and-half decade career, which included active scholarship even after his formal retirement. Rich empirical detail, theoretical relevance, and self-reflective methodological skepticism defined his rich corpus of scholarship, which included over a dozen books and scores of articles/chapters. Most of these were based on a lifetime of research and conference travel to India.

Professor Brass was born in Boston and attended Harvard College where he earned a BA degree in political science, before going to the University of Chicago where he completed his PhD in political science in 1964. He subsequently accepted a position in the Department of Political Science and the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies at the University of Washington (Seattle) in 1965, where he taught until his formal retirement as professor emeritus in 1999. Professor Brass's first book, *Factional Politics in an Indian State: The Congress Party in Uttar Pradesh* (University of California Press, 1965) contributed to the emerging theoretical literature on political parties/factions and examined the integrative and representative role of party "factions" in deepening participatory democracy in post-Independence India.

Perhaps Professor Brass's most important and influential work was his landmark *Language, Religion, and Politics in North India* (Cambridge University Press, 1974). This three-case (and over four hundred-page) comparative study took an "instrumentalist" approach to the study of ethnic/national identity formation and challenged the previously dominant "primordialist" paradigm. In this book, which was the product of years of empirical field work, Professor Brass argued that the consolidation of ethnic identities and group recognition was the result of communal elites successfully mobilizing their "communities" around carefully selected cultural symbols, and institutionalizing their leadership and emerging group identity into permanent organizations including political parties. This work contributed not only to the area studies literature on North India, but also added analytical value to understanding and explaining other cases of group mobilization and ethnic/national identity formation beyond India.

Professor Brass made a significant methodological shift in his

scholarship toward the latter part of his career. Becoming somewhat skeptical of purely "positivist" approaches to research—both qualitative and especially quantitative—he transitioned into more postmodernist/critical modes of analysis including "interpretation" and "narrative." This included the supposition that the construction of academic "knowledge" is often conditioned by power dynamics, as argued by philosopher Michel Foucault. This intellectual evolution resulted in the publication of two important books. The first was *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective Violence* (Princeton University Press, 1997) in which Professor Brass examined how perception and politically strategic interpretations of supposed "hard facts" by political actors facilitated communal violence in India. His next major book of over four-hundred pages was *The Production of Hindu-Muslim Violence in Contemporary India* (University of Washington Press, 2003) which built on this "interpretative" methodological tilt.

Professor Brass's last major academic project was a multi-volume political biography of Congress Party leader Charan Singh, who he had met as a graduate student in the 1960s and from whom he had inherited a treasure trove of personal documents, which provided insights into transformation in Indian politics over several decades. This work represented not only an academic contribution/analysis, but also a true "labor of love" for a confidant and research subject who he had known for his entire career. It also demonstrated Professor Brass's deep sense of personal loyalty to his friends.

On an interpersonal level, Professor Brass was known to sometimes be gruff and direct in his style of communication—perhaps, a product of his rough Bostonian childhood. Yet, a little-known fact about Professor Brass was his deep commitment to human rights, open research access for scholars to India (and other developing countries), and unbridled academic freedom in the pursuit of knowledge and "the truth." As a result, he was never hesitant to critique political leaders (including those of the postcolonial Indian state) for their periodic excesses against their own people and the scholarly community for its reluctance to unpack the power dynamics behind the "construction of knowledge" in relation to South Asia. Professor Brass was arguably the most influential American scholar on Indian politics for a generation, whose work defined the field with its rich empirical, theoretical, and methodological contributions. His active presence and "voice" will be missed but never forgotten by those who knew him and utilized his rich corpus of academic works which defined their own intellectual trajectories. ■

—Jugdep S. Chima, Hiram College

## Russell L. Hanson

Russell L. Hanson (February 21, 1953–November 8, 2022), emeritus professor of political science at Indiana University, Bloomington, recently passed away in Minneapolis, Minnesota. An accomplished scholar working at the intersection of political theory and American politics, Hanson's teaching and researching chiefly focused on the history of American liberalism and its impact on public policy.

A Minnesota native who regularly returned to his cabin "up north" and loved to hike with colleagues and friends from graduate

school, Hanson earned a BS in political science at St. John's University (Minnesota) in 1975. He then pursued graduate study at the University of Minnesota, where he worked under Terence Ball and earned a PhD in 1982. In 1991, he was awarded a Distinguished Alumnus Award from his PhD alma mater. While Hanson held prestigious fellowships from, among others, the Center for Advanced Study in Behavioral Science and University of London, he spent his entire career at Indiana University. He was initially hired as a Lecturer in 1980, was promoted to Assistant Professor in 1982, Associate Professor with tenure in 1987, and then Full Professor in 1995.

The political science department's first winner of the prestigious