

MODI'S HINDUTVA POLICY AND ITS IMPACT ON INDO-PAK RELATIONS

*Shi Xiaolian, Uzma Siraj and Alla Ud Din**

Abstract

This research paper explores the Hindutva ideology of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by analysing its implications for Pakistan. BJP's ascension to power led the Hindu Nationalist government to implement the Hindutva ideological rhetoric. With a substantial Muslim population living in India and rivalry with Pakistan, such policies have significant implications for the Indian Muslim community as well as for Pakistan. These Hindutva-driven policies have not only raised concern regarding minorities' rights in India, affecting Kashmiri Muslims but also raising security challenges for Pakistan. In the past decade, the legislative and executive bodies have been actively engaged in promoting this ideology, as evidenced by the amendment of national citizenship law, growing riots against Muslims, and the Indian government's policy towards Pakistan. By analysing the recent minorities-related events, this paper seeks to assess the impact of the policies of the BJP government towards the Indian Muslim community and its interaction with Pakistan.

Keywords: Hindutva, Pakistan, India, BJP, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Muslims.

Introduction

The Hindu nationalist BJP is the ruling party in India, which came to power after defeating the secular Indian National Congress in the 2014 elections.¹ This party, influenced by Hindutva ideology, has ruled the country since then. In the last few years, India has witnessed a sharp increase in human rights violations, with the Kashmir region being particularly affected by this vicious trend. India is perceived as a threat by Pakistan due to its urge to maximise its influence in all neighbouring countries, particularly in Pakistan. Hindus are over 80% of the total population of India, and Muslims are 15% of the population. Even with this, India has the highest number of over (200 million) Muslims, next to Indonesia and Pakistan in the world.² The alienation of the Muslim minority faith post diversionary attention and the majoritarian politics championed by Hindu fundamentalists has tarnished India's status as a liberal, secular democracy.³ The United Nations' top official, in a visit to India, said that he was worried about the increased number of human rights abuses in India.⁴

*Dr. Shi Xiaolian is Executive Dean of the World Institute of Politics, Economy and Technology, Adjunct Lecturer at Shanghai Open University. PhD, Shanghai International Studies University, China. Dr. Uzma Siraj is an Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of IR at Federal Urdu University Islamabad. Dr. Alla ud Din has PhD in IR from Shanghai International Studies University, Shanghai, China. The author(s) can be reached at 38580407@q.com.

Since the Modi-led Hindu nationalist government has come to power, there has been an intensification of communal and religious tensions. The BJP, led by the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is the political offshoot of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which is an Indian right-wing Hindu nationalist paramilitary volunteer organisation that seeks to transform India into Hindutva. Hindutva is a term that refers to an ideology that aims to establish the dominance of Hindus. The ideology considers non-Hindus ‘foreign invaders and second-rate citizens. The BJP established Hindutva as the foundation for Hindu nationalism, which helped them win elections in 2014, 2019, and June 2024. However, Muslims in all of India were made the scapegoat for unifying the Hindu vote. Therefore, the conflict in Kashmir has become the centre of communal tensions because the dispute is being used to promote Hindu nationalism.⁵ Moreover, the BJP committed in their election campaign to repeal Articles 370 and 35A, which determine the permanent residence of the state and special privileges for the permanent residents of Jammu & Kashmir. Removing this article allows non-permanent residents to buy properties in the state. This article provided the basis for the state’s ascension to the Indian Union in 1947. In the aftermath of the revocation of Articles 370 and 35A in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) on August 5, 2019, and the passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act in December 2019, it appears that the Modi government is systematically and aggressively implementing extremist policies against its Muslim minority. The article focuses on the situation arising out of this legislation. Additionally, it observes that anti-Muslim rhetoric is on the rise, affecting India’s social fabric and provoking extremism in Indian society. This has not only worsened social security for Indian Muslims domestically but has become a severe threat to security in the Indian subcontinent. India-Pakistan relations have been worse under Modi’s slavish dedication to Hindutva ideology since 2014, obstructing any opportunities for progress that might have been discovered under Nehruvian Idealism, notwithstanding ongoing difficulties. This research attempts to address the overarching question: How abrogation of Articles 370 & 35A will impact the security scenario in relations with Pakistan and the state of the Muslim community in Kashmir and India?

Modi Hindutva Policy: Extreme Ideology

The term Hindutva was coined by Chandranath Basu, a Bengali conservative litterateur, and the ideology finds its roots in the Advaita Vedanta school of thought, which is a classical system of spiritual realisation referring to the idea that only the Hindu Brahman caste is the ultimate reality. The idea was later propounded by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a Hindu Nationalist, in his book “Hindutva: Who is a Hindu” in 1923. In his book, V.D. Sawarkar describes Hindutva as “Hinduness” or “the quality of being a Hindu” and promotes the idea of a great Indian Nation as “Akhand Bharat” in which Hinduism in all its forms recognises the Indian subcontinent as the land of their ancestors where the religion originated.⁶ Hindutva is the idea that the Indian subcontinent is the land where Hinduism originated, and ancestral Hindus live

here; therefore, this land should, characteristically and culturally, be exclusively occupied by Hindu communities like Hinduism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Buddhism. Some studies believe that this idea of "national purity" draws heavily on the concept of European fascism. It was under the guidance of this concept that Adolf Hitler proposed the elimination of the Semitic race in the country - Jewish ideas.⁷ The existence of a specific correlation between Hindutva ideology and European fascism as a right-wing political concept is well known.

In 2014, the BJP assumed power as the ruling party of India. Since then, a dramatic increase in communal violence in the name of Hindu Nationalism and alleged cow slaughtering by Muslims has been noted. This rise in communal violence at the hands of Hindu Nationalists can be attributed to the communally divisive language being used by BJP leaders in their speeches. The 2014 electoral success of the BJP has greatly enabled RSS to place its most devout Pracharaks (workers) in the assembly. The number of communal violence incidents over the decade between 2008 and 2017 has been as many as 7484, killing over 1100 people according to data presented to Lok Sabha (Lower House Parliament). According to the survey conducted, most of the participants attributed this increase in communal violence to the rise of BJP to power.⁸

Modi's BJP government, acting at the whim of RSS's ambitious objective of Akhand Bharat, has dramatically influenced the Indian domestic environment and policies. An excellent design is at play by RSS leadership, where the BJP is acting as the face of the play. It's an observation that Modi's regime is perceived as remodelling India's chronicles by altering the modules and ethnic values of the region through impounding Hindutva Philosophy in the consciousness of youth. From the very beginning of the regime, the government, guided by the same "Hindu philosophy", adopted a similar approach towards them. The Indian executive authority is demonstrating such alterations that will result in the amended racial outlook of the region by promoting more Hindus to penetrate the area. Hindutva Ideology does not overshadow the religious circles but the racial and ethnic circles. The current BJP government has given priority to fascist Hinduism in India and used it as a pretext to legitimise its rule, e.g., Muslims have inequitably been blamed for feeding on the Holy cow. Such policies have been used to promote Hinduism and isolate Muslims from this region. Certainly, Kashmir has been at the top of the hit list. India's legal books stipulate that it is a secular country. Still, the current Modi regime is amending and challenging these laws to turn the Muslim majority into a minority. Inter-religious marriages are being promoted to enhance the Hindu sway. All these elements are playing a part in reducing the prestige of Kashmir. Women are already targeting youth who are being physically intimidated, and several of them are being imprisoned.

Considering the history, it is believed among the right-wing Hindus that Muslims are a threat to Hindu identity. This idea was initiated during the Mughal era when Hindu nationalist identity created a clash between Hinduism and Islam and perceived India and Hindus as under siege.⁹ Gradually, this thinking consolidated in

the right-wing Hindu group and emerged as a threat to India and promoted hatred against Muslims. As a result, the foremost notion of the nationalists of the extremist party BJP has been to rob Muslims of their identity. They implied that the concept of Akhand Bharat requires the incorporation of Kashmir into India so that they would be able to develop a better India or Hindustan. Hindutva believes that Kashmir is a part of India and, hence, it should be accepted as their property. So, they recognise the ancient Indus Valley as theirs. Through anti-Islamic rhetoric, by accusing Muslim men of trying to alter India's demography by wooing Hindu women and eating meat (from the sacred Hindu cow), they encourage the lynching of Muslims in BJP-controlled areas. This is how the Modi administration has promoted Hindu nationalism.⁷ The primary purpose behind all these measures is to spread and apply Hindutva ideology and further isolate and oppress Muslims residing in India.¹⁰

Keshav Baliram Hedgewar founded RSS, a national volunteer organisation, in 1925, and it is based on Hindutva ideology to serve the objectives of Hindu nationalism. The founding motivation of RSS lies in the aim of propagating the Hindutva ideology to strengthen the Hindu majority community and bring about the realisation of Hindu Rashtra or Akhand Bharat in the Indian sub-continent, deeming it as the ancestral land of Hindus.¹¹ The RSS, with its paramilitary style, Jefferson observes, of functioning, and some have sometimes seen its emphasis on discipline as an Indian version of fascism. RSS has a profound ideological influence over the population of India as it draws upon the need for violence to attain religious and nationalistic objectives. The ambitious slogan of RSS to build a Hindu nation in the Indian subcontinent gives rise to many forms of violence in the name of religion; as noted by David Rapaport, "all major religions have enormous potentialities for creating and directing violence".¹²

The current Hindutva movement has its origin in the RSS, and its primary and foremost mission was to unite all Hindus to liberate India from colonial domination and to fortify Hindus against minority groups such as Muslims and Christians, whom they thought were denationalising Hindus. It has since progressed to the forefront of the Hindutva movement. Modern RSS members have resorted to "cultural vigilantism", which entails vigilante organisations enforcing Hindu practices and beliefs such as cow protection. Even though beef eating is allowed in much of India, cow defenders have taken it upon themselves to punish anybody who sells, buys, or consumes beef, the majority of whom are non-Hindus. The RSS had hoped to include Kashmir. Since Partition, the RSS has advocated for Kashmir and Jammu to be included in the Hindu homeland. It has consistently protested any decision that does not result in the entire inclusion of Kashmir and Jammu. This contains Article 370, which has been included in the Indian constitution and provides the area with unique status and certain autonomy. This is significant since the RSS is regarded as the parent organisation of the current ruling party in India, which is the BJP, which also revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status and placed the territory under curfew.¹³

Penetration of Hindutva in Indian Society and Politics

The secular traditions, which have influenced Indian politics since its establishment, are eroding, and the emergence of the Hindu right in politics has resulted in the Hindu nationalist BJP, led by Narendra Modi, receiving a resounding mandate in the 2014 and 2019 elections. The Hindutva ideology that drove the BJP had a chance to permeate every aspect of society in 2014. In 2019, when the BJP solidified community support for it politically, it gained even more traction as a widely held belief system in India. The BJP routinely and purposefully targets the non-Hindu population, especially Muslims, with the help of influential Hindutva sympathisers. Hindutva ideology, the ethnoreligious exclusionist ideology of the Hindu right-wing, has started to impact Muslims through government policy decisions and socially incited acts of violence and oppression, frequently accompanied by the government's willful silence.¹⁴

Muslims have lived in India for over a millennium and ruled the country for centuries under Muslim emperors and Sultans. Islam and Muslims are portrayed as "foreign invaders" that are hostile and antagonistic to the Hindu essence (Hindutva) of India by RSS, which seeks to revive Hindu heritage and culture. India is struggling for its survival, and the outcome will determine whether it remains a secular, democratic, and pluralistic state or transforms into a Hindu majoritarian autocracy. The Indian Ministry of Minority Affairs released the Sachar Committee Report in 2006, which addressed the systematic discrimination against Muslims and the erasure of their culture and values. It also disproved the idea that Muslims were a privileged minority and highlighted the extent of economic and educational deprivation that Indian Muslims face.¹⁵

According to its constitution, India, the most populous democracy in the world, is a "sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic" where the prime minister and his Council of Ministers have most of the executive power and a ceremonial head of state with little executive authority is the Indian president. Most of India's 14 prime ministers since its independence in 1947 have originated from the northern, Hindi-speaking parts of the nation, and all but three have been upper-caste Hindus. The Lok Sabha (House of the People), which has 543 seats, is where directly elected legislators represent the country's 28 states and eight union territories. This body may be dissolved at the president's discretion. The Rajya Sabha (Council of States), a more petite upper body with a maximum of 250 seats, has no authority over the prime minister or their cabinet but is allowed to review but not veto revenue legislation. State and Lok Sabha representatives are chosen to serve five-year terms. State assemblies determine legislators for the Rajya Sabha for a six-year tenure; the remaining twelve are president-appointed.¹⁶

A Perspective on Modi's Rhetoric of Hindutva

Modi's politics of supporting "Hindutva" is a complicated matter with a convoluted history involving numerous political and socioeconomic forces working in tandem. Hindu nationalism, which emphasises the core of Hindu identity and views Hindu culture as the cornerstone of Indian civilisation, is at the core of Hindutva. According to the opposing viewpoint, the concept also acts as a unifying factor, meaning that a nation may not have caste, social class, or geographic exclusivity. In addition to being seen as one of the rarest methods of eliminating the "appeasement" thought to exist in many religions, it also guarantees impartiality, fairness, or treatment of individuals regardless of religion. Hindutva has proven to be an effective electoral tactic for the BJP, mobilising Hindu supporters and leading to the party's win in numerous elections, despite the scepticism of some members of the public. The first is that Modi oversees a Hindutva milieu, which means that there are several justifications for the political agenda that Modi develops and presents to the Indian people. The biggest democracy's leaders want an inclusive society, but they can't agree on what constitutes the "idea of India". The intended nationalist values that were supposed to unite its people are now being questioned because of this ambiguity.

The complex relationship between Hinduism and Hindutva examines how the two converge and diverge in Indian politics. Hindutva is the political philosophy substantiated by the BJP and the RSS, and Hinduism is the oldest and eternal religion of the Indian subcontinent. This debate over the intricate relationship between Hinduism and Hindutva has gained momentum since the BJP gained preeminence in Indian politics, especially after their electoral victories in the 1990s and two previous elections.¹⁷

The 17th Lok Sabha elections were held in April and May 2019, and Narendra Modi's BJP won with a resounding victory. The BJP was the first party to achieve a parliamentary majority in 2014, ending 30 years of coalition governments. It was also the first party to win successive majorities since 1971, building on its 2014 victory. Since Modi describes himself as a Hindu nationalist, many analysts saw his campaign as polarising. The 2019 election cycle (and a crucial state election in Uttar Pradesh in 2022) focused on nationalism and religion, even though he and his party have long sought to emphasise development and good governance. Many observers are growing concerned that strident Hindu majoritarianism poses a threat to both India's religious minorities and the nation's syncretic traditions.¹⁸

The opposition parties in India claimed that the strikes in September 2016 were false. They said that the Modi administration utilised fictitious "surgical strikes" to mislead the populace and hide his wrongdoing, particularly in deals for military equipment. The opposition parties interrogated Modi for his illegal participation in the US\$ 8.6 billion sale of 36 Rafale combat jets. Congressman Rahul Gandhi referred to the "surgical strike" as "Khoon ki Dalaali" to gain political advantage in the impending state and federal elections.¹⁹

The Hindutva movement and proponents of a secular atmosphere have split apart in Indian society. Today's conservative majority governs India, and regrettably, it is they who encourage hatred in the political sphere. The Hindutva philosophy is carried forward by the BJP, which represents a hatred against the 14.2% Muslims in India.²⁰ It is important to remember that tensions between Hindus and Muslims have persisted even in the years following independence, with the Babri Mosque and the Gujrat riots being two of the most notable examples. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the BJP's nominee, was elected, and it was predicted that there would be more sectarian unrest between Muslims and Hindus, which is precisely what has happened. There are numerous cases of this, including the forced feeding of a Muslim during Ramadan and the staged conversion of 57 Muslims in Agra that was dubbed the "homecoming".²¹ The objectives of the BJP are to stop globalisation by consolidating its authority in India and establishing India as a significant economic force using a Swadeshi strategy. With the advent of the BJP and its Hindutva-inspired rhetoric, there has been a marked decline in the discourse against Muslims in India.²² After coming to power in 2014, Prime Minister Modi's government implemented some of the most concerning crimes against Muslims and other minorities that have addressed community issues during the following four years. As a result, there has been a rise in prejudice and violence, as well as in the rhetoric of right-wing Hindu organisations that have some backing from prominent BJP officials. International human rights reports assert that radical ideas have been encouraged and assimilated into society by Hindutva forces and the BJP's ideological support.²³ This indicates that in a society where history is being rewritten, and minorities in India are viewed as foreigners, even ostensibly, Congress political figures have turned to Hindu dominance.

It is crucial to note that, despite being aware of the unique circumstances and characteristics of every minority group or community, Muslims in India and those who support them outside have suffered at the hands of radical Hindu right-wing narratives and acts of violence. This implies that while women, Dalits, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and other marginalised groups in India have individual, justifiable complaints due to persecution by Hindu radicals affiliated with the BJP, they also share a common cause. Acknowledging this will help improve human rights advocacy. Specifically, the conclusions drawn here regarding the role of Indian Muslims in the 1920s and 1930s who endured the hatred of Hindus like V.D. Savarkar.²⁴

The current Modi regime's policies primarily benefit the Hindu majority, disregarding the minorities that have lived in various parts of India for as long as the soil itself. The idea of inclusive, pluralist nationalism is in ruins because of the dramatic shift in Indian domestic politics. Modi's populist rhetoric, close ties with India's economic elite, and advocacy of Hindutva, or Hindu nationalist ideology, account for his unstoppable popularity. However, he is profiting from India's promising financial future. The nation also strongly supports Modi's form of populist dictatorship. Hindutva Ideology is a complex interplay of multiple religious, cultural, social, economic, historical and political perspectives. However, it also draws support and opposition from various perspectives. Hindu nationalism is the base for this

ideology, which fathoms Hindu cultural and religious identity at the foundation of Indian civilisation. It is a unifying force that transcends any division in Hindu society based on caste or creed. Hindu identity is the cohesive force of this ideology. Besides, Hindutva is intertwined with the notions of national security, and the supporters see a strong Hindu nationalist stand as the main factor that will protect India from external threats. The task of forming both economic development and stability is usually included in the set of objectives since it is considered that one single Hindu identity gives the country strength and popularity. As a result, development becomes more noticeable. However, the Hindu nationalists will try to inscribe it by signing it as 'Hindutva' to rework history to argue that there should be no need for secularism by showing that Hinduism is the only position to be adopted for the religion.

The Concept of Ethnonationalism and Hindutva

Modi's approach of combining Hindutva (religious rhetoric and nationalism with political objectives and national security might best be defined through Ethnonationalism. "Nations are defined by a shared heritage, which usually includes a common language, a common faith, and a common ethnic ancestry" is the core tenet of ethnic nationalists. It is possible to classify people of different nationalities as second-class citizens.²⁵ Under such a framework, ethnic and religious identity becomes a cohesive force and an instrument in the hands of leadership to nurture unity among the populace. In such cases, grievances against any community are usually portrayed as threatening their culture, civilisation, and identity to mobilise mass support to advance their political interests as a national security objective. In this way, Hinduism plays a paradoxical role in India. It becomes a centripetal force among the Hindu population of India, which becomes a binding force; however, the Hindutva ideology, at its core, has proved to be a centrifugal force in Indian society, which is a combination of various religious and ethnic groups. Thus, Hinduism is often used as a centripetal force to counter the impacts of Hindutva.

According to the ideology of ethnonationalism, nationality is a political construct founded on cultural supremacy, which makes it necessary to exclude other groups. In the shape of racism in the global north, antisemitic Nazi Germany, and white supremacist ideology in contemporary America, we have seen examples of this type of politics throughout history and space.

Regrettably, majoritarianism, prejudice against minority groups, authoritarianism, and violent extremism invariably accompany the emergence of ethnonationalism. India is no exception in this regard.

The present right-wing government in India, which has strong ties to the RSS, whose ultimate objective of building a Hindu Rashtra is no secret, has backed Hindu nationalism, or Hindutva, as it is known.

This agenda has taken many forms, including removing references to the Mughal era in India from school history textbooks, renaming streets and cities with

Islamic names, and giving vigilante organisations that incite violence against minorities tacit amnesty. Such methodical violence and historical revisionism have a devastating effect on disadvantaged communities because they seek to suppress, instil psychological feelings of inferiority and acceptance of a subservient position and advance the agenda of a Hindu Rashtra at the expense of a secular state.

Impact of Hindutva Ideology on Regional Peace

The growth of Hindu nationalism also alters the dynamics of international relations. During the Cold War, Nehru's foreign policy consisted of nonalignment and significant funding for international organisations like the UN. India avoided making military alliances with other nations until the conclusion of the Cold War and kept a long distance from the US. China and Pakistan became closer allies of the US. Obama's 2009 pivot to Asia plan saw the US and India forge stronger relations, with the US supporting India's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council. The US sought to balance China's growing regional and global danger, pivoting to Asia and improving ties with India.²⁶

The US election 2016 saw a more intriguing development in the US-Indian relationship. Hindu nationalist groups started endorsing Donald Trump, the Republican nominee for president. What the groups saw as Trump's tough stance on immigration from Muslims and terrorism energised them. For Trump, the Shiv Sena, the VHP, and other Hindu nationalist groups organised sizable open prayer gatherings. Trump utilised his increasing popularity among some Indian demographic segments to his advantage throughout the election season. The usage of a Trump campaign ad appealing to American Hindus by Shalabh Kumar, Chairman of the campaign's Indian American Advisory Council, is arguably the most intriguing. The advertisement had Hindu symbolism and music, and at the end, Trump said in Hindi, "Ab ki Baar, Trump Sarkar", which translates to, "This time, there will be a Trump government".²⁷ Trump may be trying to curb Islamic militancy in Pakistan by endorsing Hindu nationalists. India may interpret Trump's statements and associations with Hindu nationalists as an implicit endorsement of a tough stance towards Pakistan. Trump declared in late December 2017 that he would stop giving military assistance to Pakistan because that country serves as a haven for terrorists.²⁸ India applauded this announcement, and it marks a significant shift following decades of US military and economic support for Pakistan.

Pakistan and other nations in the region are also affected by the extremist mindset of India's populist leaders, and they are now fully aware of India's hegemonic plans. Weak states like Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka are aware of this threat and firmly oppose India's assertiveness. India is suspected of arming and training Tamil terrorists in the 1980s and of aiding insurgencies in neighbouring countries, as it has allegedly done in the past in Baluchistan.²⁹ Indian intransigence can be explained by the more recent examples of their brinkmanship, which were evident during the Doklam issue and the recent battles in Galwan Valley. Beijing's gentle and skilful crisis

resolution strategy enabled India to avoid profound humiliation in front of the international community on both occasions.

Due to the growing tide of extremism, militancy, and terrorism, South Asia is often regarded as the most dangerous region in the world. It is already a delicate region with long-standing problems. Because of the three hostile nuclear powers in the area under the current anarchic international system, it is also known as the "nuclear flash point throughout the globe". Major Powers in the region have multiple interests, with an Indian-centric perspective, due to the numerous ethnic, sectarian, religious, and territorial issues that have resulted in military confrontations between players and the nuclearisation of regional governments. These interests could be in economics, politics, or strategy. Presently, the US's role in curbing China's influence and containing it through the Indian Ocean by strengthening ties with New Delhi has increased the involvement of major nations.³⁰ Currently holding a similar position is President Biden, who claims that because the more prominent nations are also pursuing those who have the problem, the interstate civil war in Afghanistan would inevitably impact not just the area but the entire world. Since US soldiers left Afghanistan, South Asia has become more strategically significant. Defence specialists claim that the US troops' departure is a ploy to change the focus from direct to indirect action, as suggested by Indian Foreign Minister Jaishankar. Conversely, it is a known reality that proxies can always act more recklessly when indirect actions are used. Afghanistan is one area where regional and major powers will continue to wage proxy wars, as they have in the past.

On the other hand, despite the February 25, 2021, agreement on the Line of Control (LOC) ceasefire, India and Pakistan continue to have a hostile relationship due to several fundamental issues, including the conflict in Kashmir.³¹ These issues are tarnished by lingering tensions rooted in religious and identity-related issues, which have recently been made worse by the dominance of Hindutva ideology in India. One cannot undervalue the region's security concerns without altering the contexts in which these tensions operate, given the current geopolitical situation of the area, which includes the US-China tensions, the Indo-China border conflict, the unresolved Kashmir conflict, the Afghanistan crises, China's resolve to resist US supremacy, and the Indian-Pakistani alliance.

The potential impact of Hindutva ideology and Hindu nationalism does not necessarily end at India's borders. A lot of radical Hindu nationalists think that Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan should be on a proper map of India. Hindu nationalists have even begun a drive to modify Indian textbooks to update the maps to reflect what they believe are the correct borders.³² Though it is now unknown, India will be more inclined to fight Pakistan, other neighbours, and potentially even China if this mentality leads to an expansionist foreign policy. Although India's constitution still upholds secularism, the last three decades have shown a shift in the country's direction toward Hindu nationalism and fundamentalism. Nehru's proclamation that India could be a peaceful, multireligious

state was the foundation of his secularism. Jinnah remained sceptical. The Modi-led Hindu Nationalist government in India has provoked the Pakistani people. In Pakistan, Modi is widely regarded as a Hindu nationalist pursuing an extreme ideology that is causing problems for Muslims, particularly the people of Kashmir, whose situation is deteriorating. All the political parties of Pakistan are on the same page when it comes to the issue of Kashmir and the Indian government's atrocities against the Kashmiri people.

Modi's Hardline Policy on Kashmir

The hardline approach taken by Prime Minister Modi on the issue of Kashmir may have helped the BJP win elections. Still, it only served further to distance the Kashmiri people from the Indian Union. Instead of trying to engage in dialogue and promote reconciliation with the Kashmiri population, Modi opted for a strategy of using brute force to suppress any dissent and deny fundamental rights in the region. This absence of alternative channels for Kashmiris to express their grievances led to the emergence of secessionist groups, including those with Islamic leanings, which gained significant traction by social media to highlight the human rights abuses committed by the Indian state.

This situation has indirectly led to an increase in the number and size of the various separatist groups. Some of these groups, which have echoed their messages to many youths, are easily identifiable. This backlash can be attributed to the flawed elections of 1987, which sparked an explosive situation that caused many Hindu Pandits to leave Jammu and Kashmir. Even though separatist groups that demanded fundamental rights had been active in the region for a long time, they did not have extensive support among the Kashmiri population.³³

Kashmiri people have been persistently abused during the last decades, and particularly since 2014, this has added more spirit to the already existing Freedom and Justice movements. Therefore, they proved efficient at rallying the support of people who subscribed to separatist schools of thought, particularly after the case of the killing of Burhan Wani, a well-known leader and an essential member of the Hizbul Mujahideen who was perceived as a symbol of the resistance against Indian occupation.

His death provoked many protests in the Kashmir Valley, and there were thousands of people at his funeral. After that, the government of India put a blockade in the region, which lasted for more than 50 days, consequently exacerbating an already complicated security scenario. Agitation occurred across the Kashmir valley as thousands of people were seen attending the funeral procession. As a result, the Indian government imposed a curfew in the region that lasted for more than 50 days, fueling the already fragile security situation.

Over 500,000 troops and paramilitary personnel have been stationed in IIOJ&K since 1987. It is an entirely military-occupied region. In the recent past, the

number has grown to half a million soldiers, who is more than a combatant for every ten Kashmiri citizens. Such massive military deployments have affected the everyday life of ordinary people, who have been subjected to various human rights violations due to this military presence and abuse.

The human rights violations were also highlighted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR) office in June 2018 and July 2019. Reports demonstrate the rule-breaking patterns at which local security forces have begun abusing human rights in Kashmir since they lost Burhan Wani in 2016. These violations include cases of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, forced confessions, sexual violence, and different forms of intimidation and harassment, which are most of the time employed to quell protests and dissent in the area. Such approaches have led to an atmosphere of fear and oppression in Kashmir, which has resulted in numerous human rights violations.³⁴ UNOHCHR, in its report, cited the Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS), going on to note that 1,081 civilians were reported extrajudicially murdered between 2008 and 2018 in the IIOJ&K region.

Article 370 gave Indian-held Kashmir its constitution and a central assembly that had broad autonomy concerning formulating laws and ordinances that were of local importance. The Central Government retained control over the territories, such as defence, foreign policy, communication, and the economy, while the states of Jammu and Kashmir were given political autonomy. Moreover, Article 35A imposed many limitations on buying property by non-Kashmiris, which affected their possibility of contesting elections and working against the censorship board in the local bureaucracy. Such exceptions were developed to help Jammu and Kashmir have a separate identity and considerable decision-making power in the Indian Union.

Pakistan`s Response and Way Forward

Pakistan is expressing grave concern over the developments in India, which it perceives as indications of the resurgence of fascism in the country. Comparisons are being drawn between Modi and Hitler, with Pakistan urging the international community to take note of the fascist policies being implemented in India. However, the question of whether Pakistan should take an active role in opposing these developments requires careful consideration. Despite the pressure to accept the new status quo, Pakistan may have the opportunity to deepen its ties with China, focus on completing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and work towards improving its economy while India is preoccupied. The actions of the Indian government under Modi's leadership have led to the erosion of India's image as a secular and democratic nation.³⁵

Regarding their bilateral relations, Pakistan and India are presently at a standstill. The war between the two nuclear states is unlikely, leading India to come to the negotiating table eventually. India's deterrents from engaging in a full-scale war

with Pakistan include international pressure, domestic factors, and military capacity. The Pulwama attack of February 27, 2019, taught India a valuable lesson as its perception that Pakistan would not retaliate was incorrect. However, if India seeks to provoke hostilities against Pakistan, it would do so from the South (via sea). Thus, Pakistan should be prepared for such an eventuality.³⁶

Conclusion

A key conclusion of the article is that the transformation of Indian territorial nationalism into religious nationalism has a dangerous impact on the discourse of the Indian state, both at home and abroad. The main characteristic of Hindu nationalism is its exclusionist approach to other Indian religious minorities, particularly Muslims. The contestation and reassertion of religious identities, which had previously occurred in the pre-partition era, have been renewed in India since the 1990s due to the mobilisation and politicisation of electorates. Violence and anti-Muslim hate campaigns are the consequence of the religious intolerance and polarisation of Indian society that the Hindutva ideology as a state discourse has sparked.

Tensions with Pakistan are increasing due to India's active rebuilding of nationalism along Hindu lines, which is evident from domestic strife. The primary cause is the emerging Indian hardliner strategy, which is marked by rhetoric that is both anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan while portraying Pakistan as a decisive Muslim adversary. Indian nationalism is exclusive and extends beyond its borders. The BJP government is only involved in an all-out conflict with Pakistan. The insecurity of Indian minorities and the hostility of the Indian public towards Pakistan are, on the other hand, both growing due to the significant rise in anti-Muslim sentiments in India. The likelihood of the BJP engaging in any military venture against Pakistan as part of its strategy for handling internal and external pressures is high, given the war-mongering attitude of the political class and media.

References

- 1 "Hinduness" is defined as a Hindu political ideology, which encompasses social cultural and religious connotation and justification of Hindu hegemony in India.
- 2 Akhand Bharat is described as the undivided India, which entails the concept of unity and include all countries of South Asia in the united India. The idea has been endorsed by prominent historical Hindu leaders and has specially been emphasized by the BJP.
- 3 Times of India, "BJP's 31% Lowest Vote Share of Any Party to Win Majority," *Online*, May 19, 2014, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/news/bjps-31-lowest-vote-share-of-any-party-to-win-majority/articleshow/35315930.cms>.
- 4 PEW Research Center, "RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION OF INDIA," online, 2021, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2021/09/21/population-growth-and-religious-composition/>.
- 5 Lindsay Maizland, "India's Muslims: An Increasingly Marginalized Population," Council on Foreign Relations, <https://www.cfr.org/background/india-muslims-marginalized-population-bjp-modi>.
- 6 Al-Arabiya News, "UN Chief Chides India on Human Rights Record," <https://english.alarabiya.net/News/world/2022/10/19/UN-chief-chides-India-on-human-rights-record>.
- 7 Gunawan, Y., Putri, D. N. C. K., Sienda, R. M., Rosidi, S., & Melinda, A. C. (2021). Pakistan-India conflicted the right of self-determination of Kashmir. *Diponegoro Law Review*, 6(1), 139-156. <https://doi.org/10.14710/dilrev.6.1.2021.139-156>
- 8 V.D. Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva*, (New Delhi: Global Vision Publishing House, 2016).
- 9 Maxime Decout, "Jews as Strangers, Strangers as Jews in the Twentieth-Century French Novel," in *The Stranger in Early Modern and Modern Jewish Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 160-75.
- 10 Chaitanya Mallapur, "28% Rise In Communal Incidents Under NDA, Short Of UPA High," online, 2018, [https://www.indiaspend.com/28-rise-in-communal-incidents-under-nda-short-of-upa-high-58126/#:~:text=As many as 7%2C484 communal,\(lower house of Parliament\)](https://www.indiaspend.com/28-rise-in-communal-incidents-under-nda-short-of-upa-high-58126/#:~:text=As many as 7%2C484 communal,(lower house of Parliament)).
- 11 Mohammad Omar, "The Muslim 'Threat' in Right-Wing Narratives: A Critical Discourse Analysis," SOAS South Asia Institute Working Paper Series, 2021, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/The%20Muslim%20Threat%20In%20Right%20Wing%20Narratives%20-%20A%20Critical%20Discourse%20Analysis.pdf>.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Team, B. W. (2019, July 31). Explained: What are Articles 370 and 35A? Why they are important for J&K. *Business Standard India*.
- 14 Pratap Chandra Swain, *Bharatiya Janata Party: Profile and Performance* (New Delhi: APH Publishing, 2001).
- 15 Hassan F. Virk, Farwa Batool, and Sania Muneer, "HINDUTVA AT CROSSROADS: PHASED HISTORY, PREJUDICIAL PRESENT, AND SEGREGATED FUTURE," *NDU Journal* 36 (2022): 17-25, <https://ndujournal.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/view/126>.
- 16 PRS India, "Sachar Committee Report Summary," 2006, https://prsindia.org/files/policy/policy_committee_reports/1242304423--Summary_of_Sachar_Committee_Report.pdf.
- 17 Hasenclever, Andreas, and Volker Rittberger. "Does religion make a difference? Theoretical approaches to the impact of faith on political conflict." *Millennium* 29, no. 3 (2000): 641-674.
- 18 Anuja Bose, "Hindutva and the Politicization of Religious Identity in India," *Journal of Peace, Conflict and Development*, no. 13 (2009), www.peacestudiesjournal.org.uk/
- 19 Kronstadt, K. Alan "India's Domestic Politics" Homeland Security Digital Library 2019 <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=825972>. Accessed on 23 October 2022
- 20 Congressional Research Service, "India's Domestic Political Setting" (Washington, 2024), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IFio298.pdf>.
- 21 The World Statistics, "Religion Population in India 2024," online, 2024, <https://theworldstatistics.com/religion-population-in-india/>.
- 22 Hemendra Chaturvedi, "Agra Conversion Row: Uproar in Parliament as Oppn Seeks PM's Reply; UP Cops on High Alert," *Online*, December 11, 2014, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/agra-conversion-row-uproar-in-parliament-as-oppn-seeks-pm-s-reply-up-cops-on-high-alert/story-SSig5kqztZCJb2oXLdxAOJ.html>.
- 23 Salim Lakha, "From Swadeshi to Globalisation: The Bharatiya Janata Party's Shifting Economic Agenda," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 25, no. 3 (2002): 83-103, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/00856400208723493>.
- 24 Priya Chacko, "The Right Turn in India: Authoritarianism, Populism and Neoliberalisation," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 48, no. 4 (August 8, 2018): 541-65, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2018.1446546>.
- 25 Mohammed Ayoob, "The Rise of Hindu Nationalism in Historical Perspective," *India Review* 19, no. 4 (August 7, 2020): 414-25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2020.1797318>.
- 26 Müller, "Us and Them: The Enduring Power of Ethnic Nationalism," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 2 (2008): 18-35, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20032578>.
- 27 Yogesh Joshi, "Between 'Concern' and 'Opportunity': US Pivot to Asia and Foreign Policy Debate in India," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 2, no. 3 (December 8, 2015): 314-37, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347797015601917>
- 28 Times of India, "Ab Ki Baar, Trump Sarkar," PM Modi Gives Tacit Support for Trump's Re-Election in 2020," *Online*, September 23, 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/india-and-us/abki-baar-trump-sarkar-pm-modi-gives-tacit-support-for-trumps-re-election-in-2020/articleshow/71253436.cms>.

-
- ²⁹ Salman Masood, "Trump's Request for India's Help in Afghanistan Rattles Pakistan," Online, August 22, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/22/world/asia/pakistan-trump-afghanistan-india.html>.
- ³⁰ Mir Sherbaz Khetran, "Indian Interference in Balochistan," *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 3 (2017): 112–25, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48537560>.
- ³¹ Constantino Xavier, "Converting Convergence into Cooperation: The United States and India in South Asia," *Asia Policy* 14, no. 1 (2019): 19–50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26642262%0A>.
- ³² Abhijnan Rej, "India and Pakistan Announce Ceasefire across Disputed Border," Online, February 2021, <https://thediplomat.com/2021/02/india-and-pakistan-announce-ceasefire-across-disputed-border/>.
- ³³ SANYA MANSOOR, "India's School Textbooks Are the Latest Battleground for Hindu Nationalism," April 2023, <https://time.com/6269349/india-textbook-changes-controversy-hindu-nationalism/>.
- ³⁴ Report on the Situation of Human Rights in Kashmir: Developments in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir from June 2016 to April 2018, and General Human Rights Concerns in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/IN/Developments in Kashmir June 2016 to April 2018.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/IN/Developments%20in%20Kashmir%20June%202016%20to%20April%202018.pdf)
- ³⁵ Post Round Table Report "Hindutva Mindset: Implications and Policy Options for Pakistan" Institute for Strategic Studies Research and Analysis (ISSRA) National Defence University Islamabad <https://Ndu.Edu.Pk/Issra/Psrs/G&Rs/Rt-Hindutva-Mindset-Implications-And-Policy-Options-For-Pakistan.Pdf>
- ³⁶ Post Round Table Report "Hindutva Mindset: Implications and Policy Options for Pakistan" Institute for Strategic Studies Research and Analysis (ISSRA) National Defence University Islamabad <https://ndu.Edu.Pk/Issra/Psrs/G&Rs/Rt-Hindutva-Mindset-Implications-And-Policy-Options-For-Pakistan.Pdf>