

Hindutva Under the Modi Regime: Genesis, Resurgence and Implications for Regional and Global Peace and Security

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Abstract

Hindutva is a political ideology that advocates supremacy of Hindus in India and the re-establishment of Akhand Bharat, a mythological homeland, exclusively for the Hindus. The belief in the hegemony of Hindus and the political mainstreaming of ultranationalist, right-wing Hindu extremist organizations has transformed India from a secular democratic state into an extremist Hindu Rashtra and resulted in the marginalization of religious minorities, especially Muslims. This paper aims to trace the historical and philosophical foundations of Hindutva and its manifestation under the Narendra Modi-led government and to evaluate its impact on regional and international peace and security. Additionally, the research aims to trace the history of Hindutva and juxtapose it with Hinduism in terms of their socio-political manifestations. The paper will also involve examining the implications of the resurgence of this radical ideology on Indian minorities and its impact on regional and global peace and security.

Keywords: Hindutva, Akhand Bharat, Genesis, Resurgence, Minorities, Communal Violence, Peace and Security

Introduction

Hindutva advocates the establishment of a nation-state for Hindus in view of their religious and cultural distinctiveness.² It was introduced by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in an ideological epigraph titled “Essentials of Hindutva” published in 1923.³ The term “Hindutva” has acquired fascist undertones with the passage of time.⁴ Hindutva espouses a mythical *Akhand Bharat* (Greater

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² Garrett Wallace Brown, Iain McLean, and Alistair McMillan, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2018), 381.

³ Vinay Lal, “Veer Savarkar: Ideologue of Hindutva,” UCLA | Social Sciences, accessed March 31, 2024, <https://southasia.ucla.edu/history-politics/hindu-rashtra-veer-savarkar-ideologue-hindutva/>.

⁴ Prabhat Patnaik, “The Fascism of Our Times,” *Social Scientist* 21, no. 3/4 (1993): 69–77, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3517631>.

India) which spanned over land presently in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet.⁵ Over the years, proponents of Hindutva have strategically developed and promoted ultranationalist ideologies to create a distinct sense of identity aimed at uniting all Hindus by cultivating a false perception of existential threat to their cultural and religious identity.⁶ The right-wing Hindu extremist organizations, collectively known as *Sangh Parivar*, have capitalized on advocating radical Hindu nationalism to shape policies that align with Hindutva principles. These efforts include promoting majoritarian politics, advocating legal and institutional changes to safeguard Hindu interests, and amplifying the influence of Hindu nationalist groups in public discourse.⁷

It has been noted that Narendra Modi, as a prominent right-wing Hindu leader, has played a pivotal role in championing Hindutva.⁸ Modi's ascent to power and the rise in cases of communal violence and persecution of minorities is being viewed with great skepticism all around the world as it could have far-reaching implications for regional and global peace and stability.⁹ In due course, Modi's belief in the hegemony of Hinduism and his efforts to transform India into a Hindu *Rashtra* have impaired India's credentials as a secular democracy.¹⁰

⁵ Khuram Iqbal, "The Rise of Hindutva Saffron Terrorism and South Asian Regional Security," *Journal of Security and Strategic Analysis* 5, no. 1 (2019): 43–63.

⁶ Audrey Truschke, "Hindutva's Dangerous Rewriting of History," *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, no. 24/25 (December 15, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.6636>.

⁷ Dr. Seema Khan, "Saffron Terror and Hindutva Ideology," Australian Institute of International Affairs, October 29, 2021, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/saffron-terror-and-hindutva-ideology/>.minorities are increasingly forced to chant "Jai Shri Ram" or face violent consequences.", "container-title": "Australian Institute of International Affairs", "language": "en-US", "title": "Saffron Terror and Hindutva Ideology", "URL": "https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/saffron-terror-and-hindutva-ideology/", "author": [{"family": "Khan", "given": "Dr. Seema"}], "accessed": {"date-parts": [{"2024", 4, 1}]}, "issued": {"date-parts": [{"2021", 10, 29}]}}, "schema": "https://github.com/citation-style-language/schema/raw/master/csl-citation.json"}]

⁸ Milan Vaishnav et al., "Religious Nationalism and India's Future - The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism" (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 4, 2019), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/04/04/religious-nationalism-and-india-s-future-pub-78703>.

⁹ Arundhati Roy, "Arundhati Roy: The Dismantling of Democracy in India Will Affect the Whole World," *Scroll.In*, September 14, 2023, <https://scroll.in/article/1055943/arundhati-roy-the-dismantling-of-democracy-in-india-will-affect-the-whole-world>.

¹⁰ Kallim Ullah and Dr. Amna Mahmood, "Role of Hindutva and Pragmatism in Modi's Foreign Policy towards Pakistan," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* 8, no. 2 (2019): 69–82.

Consequently, there has been a meteoric rise of right-wing Hindu extremism since assumption of power by the Modi regime; and this change in the socio-political outlook of India has regional as well as global implications.¹¹ As extremist ideologies have an innate tendency to transcend geographical borders, the same can contribute towards the regional and global geopolitical instability.¹² This paper aims to identify the factors behind the rise of Hindutva under incumbent Modi regime and its impact on regional and international peace and security.

The paper shall analyze historical facts, academic literature, political speeches, and media reports to explore the rise of Hindutva under the leadership of the incumbent Modi regime. Secondary data sources shall be utilized extensively to understand the historical foundations of Hindutva and its differentiation from Hinduism.

Historical Foundations of Hindutva: Inconsistencies between Hindutva and Hinduism

India prides itself on being a secular state but the rise of Hindu nationalism in the form of Hindutva, an ultranationalist right-wing political ideology, and how it is polarizing the Indian sociopolitical landscape is an alarming development.¹³ It is important to differentiate between Hinduism and Hindutva.

Hinduism is a religious belief system.¹⁴ The literature on Hinduism is written in the ancient Sanskrit language which is almost impossible to understand by the non-natives. It is principally used by the priests to carry out religious duties. Only 1% of the Hindus in India are well-versed with the ancient language.¹⁵ The sacred scriptures of Hinduism consist of mythological narratives that have been disseminated by Hindu religious and political leaders based on their individual interpretations and strategies.

¹¹ Nikhil Mandalaparth, "Rising Hindu Nationalism in South Asia: Implications for the United States," *The Diplomat*, August 22, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/08/rising-hindu-nationalism-in-south-asia-implications-for-the-united-states/>.

¹² Michael Gerson et al., "Faith or Fanaticism? A Dialogue on the Problem and Promise of Faith in the Middle East," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 8, no. 3 (January 2010): 3–12, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2010.504023>.

¹³ Amalendu Misra, "Hindu Nationalism and Muslim Minority Rights in India," *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 7, no. 1 (2000): 1–18.

¹⁴ Arvind Sharma, "On Hindu, Hindustān, Hinduism and Hindutva," *Numen* 49, no. 1 (2002): 1–36.

¹⁵ Sanjoy Majumder, "Why Is Sanskrit so Controversial?," *BBC News*, August 12, 2014, sec. Asia, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28755509>.

Whereas, Hindutva is an ultranationalist political ideology that speaks of a common *Rashtra* (nation), a common *Jati* (race), and a common *Sanskriti* (civilization) for Hindus. Hindutva ideologues have used these three attributes to instill a sense of belonging among Hindus in order to establish their historical association with the land.¹⁶ A recurrent assertion within right-wing nationalist Hindu factions is that India has traditionally been regarded by Hindus as a *Putrbhu* (Fatherland) and *Punyabhu* (Holy land). Therefore, Indian Muslims and Christians are forced to either assimilate into Hindu culture and adopt its customs or accept governance under the Hindu majority without seeking additional rights.¹⁷

The Evolution of Hindu Fundamentalism: From Reformist Movements to Hindutva

The political strands of Hindu fundamentalism are attributed to Brahmo Samaj (1828) and Arya Samaj (1875) movements.¹⁸ Brahmo Samaj, a monotheistic reformist movement of Hinduism, founded by Ram Mohun Roy and Debendranath Tagore, had appeared during the Bengal Renaissance. It was based on the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, among other ancient holy scriptures of Hinduism, and spoke about social and religious modifications such as the ending of the caste system, among other things. However, Arya Samaj, founded by the Sannyasi Dayanand Saraswati in the 1870s, focused exclusively on the *Vedas*, which, in turn, advocated the abolition of the caste system and equal rights for women, among other things.¹⁹

It is necessary to mention that the main distinction between Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj and Hinduism lies in the belief system. Both Brahmo and Arya Samaj adhere to a monotheistic belief in one deity and reject the worship of multiple idols.²⁰ Whereas, Hinduism embraces the worship of multiple deities.²¹ These two reformist movements had found great traction among the

¹⁶ Anantanand Rambachan, "Hinduism, Hindutva and the Contest for the Meaning of Hindu Identity: Swami Vivekananda and V.D. Savarkar," *Irénées* (blog), June 2009, https://www.irenees.net/bdf_fiche-analyse-878_en.html

¹⁷ Christophe Jaffrelot, "Hindutva's 'Purification' Drive," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 13, 2016, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/10/13/hindutva-s-purification-drive-pub-64854>.

¹⁸ Vaishnav et al., "Religious Nationalism and India's Future - The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism."

¹⁹ K.S. Kumar, "Brahmo Samaj," *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1998, <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/thematic/brahmo-samaj/v-1/sections/rammohun-roy#>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Raja Ram Mohan Roy| Brahmo Samaj: Significance & Objectives," *Jagranjosh*, August 10, 2021, <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/ram-mohan-roy-brahmo-samaj-significance-and-objectives-1444211092-1>.

masses.²² They played an instrumental role in drawing attention to the distinct identity of Hindus and the geographical sanctity of India for Hindus.²³

The inception of Hindutva ideology is another crucial moment in the history of Hindu fundamentalism. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, a prominent Hindu nationalist and key figure in Hindu Mahasabha, a Hindu nationalist political party, is credited with introducing the term “Hindutva.” It talks about Hindu nationalism and the establishment of Hindu hegemony in India through the creation of a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation). Savarkar’s book “Essentials of Hindutva” published in 1923 laid the groundwork for the politicization of Hindu identity.²⁴

Initially, Savarkar was a staunch critic of British rule who faced imprisonment for his outspoken views. He was convicted and awarded a fifty-year prison sentence in July 1911 and was transferred to the infamous Cellular Jail also known as *Kala Pani*, located in Port Blair, the capital of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. However, he underwent a significant shift in his position a few years later and asserted that Muslims, not the colonial power, were the actual adversaries of Hindus. He contended that for Hindus India is both their *Putrbhu* and *Punyabhu*. This sentiment is also found in the mindset of Hindutva ideologues, who highlight the importance of the re-establishment of the “Bharata Dynasty,” a legendary dynasty mentioned in ancient Indian texts, including the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*.²⁵

Right-wing Hindu politicians who support *Akhand Bharat* often proclaim that much like Palestine is considered the Holy Land for both Christians and Jews and Saudi Arabia is for Muslims, India is destined exclusively for Hindus. Hence, efforts are being made by Hindutva ideologues to reclaim the territories mentioned in the ancient Hindu scriptures.²⁶

²² Maheshwari Reddy, “Religious Reforms Movements in Modern India” (Academia, n.d.), https://www.academia.edu/14464624/Religious_Reforms_Movements_in_Modern_India_Notes_139_Indian_Culture_and_Heritage_Secondary_Course_MODULE_IV_10_RELIGIOUS_REFORM_MOVEMENTS_IN_MODERN_INDIA.

²³ Gunnar Bjornson, “The Geopolitics of Hindutva,” *Geopolitica*, February 12, 2016, <https://www.geopolitika.ru/en/article/geopolitics-hindutva>.

²⁴ Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva* (Independently Published, 1923).

²⁵ Pavan Kulkarni, “How Did Savarkar, a Staunch Supporter of British Colonialism, Come to Be Known as ‘Veer’?,” *The Wire*, August 15, 2022, <https://thewire.in/history/veer-savarkar-the-staunchest-advocate-of-loyalty-to-the-english-government>.

²⁶ Sharma, “On Hindu, Hindustān, Hinduism and Hindutva.”

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS): The Face of Hindu Fundamentalism

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) is a paramilitary group established in 1925 by an Indian physician Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in Nagpur, based on the ideology of Hindutva with the intention of creating a Hindu Rashtra.²⁷ Hindutva is infamous for its right-wing Hindu ultranationalist ideology and calls for politically organizing common Hindus, ostensibly, for the survival of the Hindu religion and its values.²⁸ RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat believes that the concept of *Akhand Bharat* is anticipated to become a reality in the foreseeable future. He advocates shifting from using the term “India” to exclusively adopting the word “Bharat” in all practical domains, suggesting that such linguistic change is integral to bringing about the envisioned transformation.²⁹

The RSS constitution outlines five objectives aimed at preventing divisions among Hindus in Indian society, encompassing considerations such as sect, faith, caste, creed, as well as political, commercial, dialectal, and regional differences among its followers.³⁰

Some of the most prominent objectives delineated in RSS manifesto are: (a) to eradicate the fissiparous tendencies arising from diversities of sect, faith, caste and creed and from political, economic, linguistic and provincial differences, amongst Hindus; (b) to make them realise the greatness of their past; (c) to inculcate in them a spirit of service, sacrifice and selfless devotion to Society; (d) to build up an organized and well-disciplined corporate life; and (e) to bring about an all-round regeneration of the Hindu Samaj on the basis of its Dharma and its Sanskriti. The ultimate goal of RSS is to establish *Bharatvarsha*, another name for Greater India.³¹

Discrepancies between the Indian Constitution and Hindutva Ideology

Indian Constitution accords complete protection to all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliations. The secular mode of the government in India resonates with Mahatma Gandhi’s *Sarva Dharma Sama Bhava* – the equality of

²⁷ “Sangh Parivar,” *Hindutva Watch* (blog), March 29, 2024, <https://hindutvawatch.org/sangh-parivar/>.

²⁸ RSS, “Vision and Mission,” accessed March 13, 2020, <https://www.rss.org/Encyc/2015/3/13/Vision-and-Mission.html>.

²⁹ “‘Akhand Bharat’ Will Become Reality before...: RSS Chief amid Name Change Row,” *India Today*, September 6, 2023, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/rss-mohan-bhagwant-akhand-bharat-remarks-name-change-debate-india-2431977-2023-09-06>.

³⁰ Dr. Shamsul Islam, *Hindu Nationalism and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (Media House, 2017), 121.

³¹ Sanjeev Kelkar, *Lost Years of the RSS* (SAGE Publications, 2011).

the destination of the paths followed by all religions.³² Article 14 of the Indian Constitution confers equal rights to all the Indian citizens, where the State cannot refute any individual the protection under the law.³³ According to Article 15, the State cannot distinguish between the citizens on the basis of their religious beliefs, sexual orientation, caste, race or place of birth, among few other features.³⁴ Furthermore, Article 16 talks about the provision of equal employment opportunities for every resident in any governmental or private profession.³⁵ The rights of any individual to follow any religious belief of their choice, without any unwarranted involvement of the State in that matter are ensured in Article 25.³⁶ The Constitution of India gives the freedom of choice and equal human and civil rights to all the citizens of India without any discrimination.³⁷

The Preamble to the Constitution of India explicitly declares India to be “a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic,” and underscores the principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity for all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliations.³⁸ However, a contrast arises with the ideology of Hindutva, as some of its proponents advocate for a Hindu Rashtra, envisioning a Hindu nation. This vision is perceived by many as being inconsistent with the secular nature of the Indian state.³⁹ Critics argue that certain interpretations of Hindutva may marginalize religious minorities and potentially infringe on their religious freedom, creating tensions with the constitutional commitment to a secular and inclusive society.⁴⁰

³² Jeffrey Haynes, ed., *Peace, Politics, and Religion* (MDPI AG, 2020). Politics, and Religion} (MDPI AG, 2020

³³ Government of India, “Constitution – National Portal of India,” accessed April 9, 2023, https://india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf.

³⁴ Indian Kanoon, “Article 15 in the Constitution of India 1949,” accessed April 9, 2023, <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/609295>.

³⁵ Indian Kanoon, “Article 15 in the Constitution of India 1949.”

³⁶ Constitution of India, “Article 25 – Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion,” accessed April 9, 2023, https://constitutionofindia.net/constitution_of_india/fundamental_rights/articles/Article%2025.

³⁷ Christophe Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism – A Reader* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

³⁸ Government of India, “Preamble.” n.d. Constitution of India. <https://www.constitutionofindia.net/articles/preamble/>.

³⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot, “The Fate of Secularism in India - The BJP in Power: Indian Democracy and Religious Nationalism” (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 4, 2019), <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/04/04/fate-of-secularism-in-india-pub-78689>.

⁴⁰ M. A. Muqtedar Khan and Rifat Binte Lutful, “Emerging Hindu Rashtra and Its Impact on Indian Muslims,” *Religions* 12, no. 9 (September 2021): 693, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090693>. \\uc0\\u8221 {} {} \\i {} Religions} 12, no. 9 (September 2021

Moreover, the critics of Hindutva contend that exclusive emphasis on Hindu identity, as endorsed by certain Hindutva groups, may contradict the inclusive and diverse spirit of the Indian Constitution, potentially sidelining non-Hindu communities and challenging the constitutional commitment to pluralism.⁴¹ These contrasts contribute to ongoing debates and discussions about the compatibility of Hindutva with the foundational principles of the Indian Constitution.

Hindutva Under Modi Regime: Regional and Global Implications

Narendra Modi, a bonafide *Pracharak* (Preacher) of RSS since the tender age of eight, is an ardent follower of Hindutva ideology.⁴² Modi has been effective in advancing the RSS philosophy and Hindutva under his political rule.⁴³ He talks extensively about the restoration of Hindu holy places in India.⁴⁴ Modi's political and religious inclinations are no secret. He has weaponized Hinduism to garner political mileage.⁴⁵ From what had transpired in Gujrat to what is currently happening in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), Manipur, and several other states of India underscore the distressing persecution of religious minorities under his rule.⁴⁶

The Modi government has instituted laws and policies that systematically display discrimination against Muslims and marginalize those who voice criticism against the government.⁴⁷ The discriminatory laws introduced by the

⁴¹ Ajay Skaria, "Why Hindutva Is a Racist Supremacism – Not Merely Communalism or Majoritarianism," *The Wire* (blog), September 10, 2021, <https://thewire.in/politics/why-hindutva-is-a-racist-supremacism-not-a-communalism-or-majoritarianism>.

⁴² Raja Qaiser Ahmed, "Hindu Nationalism, Modi Factor and the Ideology Matrix in Contemporary India," *Margalla Papers* 1, no. 1 (2020): 44–53.

⁴³ Ben Barron, "Hindutva, Modi and India's International Trajectory," *Synergy: The Journal of Contemporary Asian Studies*, March 20, 2020, <https://utsynergyjournal.org/2020/03/20/hindutva-modi-and-indias-international-trajectory/>.

⁴⁴ The Times of India. 2022. "Cultural Awakening: How PM Modi Is Leading the Revival of Temples in India," October 23, 2022. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/cultural-awakening-how-pm-modi-is-leading-the-revival-of-temples-in-india/articleshow/95051485.cms?from=mdr>.

⁴⁵ Sophie Landrin, "India: Modi Launches His Campaign by Weaponizing Hinduism," *Le Monde*, January 21, 2024, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/01/21/india-modi-launches-his-campaign-by-weaponizing-hinduism_6453910_4.html.

⁴⁶ Dr. S. Khan, "Vulnerabilities of Religious Minorities in India: Unmasking the Impact of Rising Hindu Nationalism," Australian Institute of International Affairs, August 18, 2023, <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/vulnerabilities-of-religious-minorities-in-india-unmasking-the-impact-of-rising-hindu-nationalism/>.

⁴⁷ "India: Government Policies, Actions Target Minorities" (Human Rights Watch, February 19, 2021), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/19/india-government-policies-actions-target-minorities>.

Modi government such as Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and setting up of Foreigners Tribunals, quasi-judicial courts that decide the citizenship of people, have sparked concerns about rising Hindu majoritarianism within the world's largest democracy.⁴⁸ This development has raised serious questions about the state of religious and democratic principles in India. The CAA fast-tracks citizenship for Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians who migrated to India before 31 December 2014 from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. These measures have been criticized for marginalizing and discriminating against certain religious communities, especially Muslims, contributing to a broader discourse on the balance of power and inclusivity in Indian democracy.⁴⁹

The rise of Hindutva-influenced violence, which emphasizes the dominance of Hindu culture and identity, has exacerbated religious and communal tensions within India. This internal polarization has greatly affected the rights and security of religious and ethnic minorities, including Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, and others. The same concerns were voiced by former US president Barack Obama when he said in June 2023 that "India may pull apart if the rights of the religious and ethnic minorities are not upheld."⁵⁰

The rise of Hindutva under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership has the potential to impact regional and global peace as well as stability in various ways.⁵¹ The Modi government's approach towards the Kashmir issue, including the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A, the bifurcation of the region into union territories, has escalated tensions at regional level.⁵² These unlawful unilateral actions aimed at changing the demographic structure and political landscape of the IIOJK are in flagrant violation of international law and the relevant UN Security Council Resolutions, especially Resolution 122 (1957).⁵³ These actions are an affront to the rights and aspirations of the Kashmiri people's inalienable

⁴⁸ "Citizenship Amendment Bill: 'Anti-Muslim' Law Challenged in India Court," *BBC News*, December 11, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-50739593>.

⁴⁹ Madhav Khosla, "The Precarious Foundations of Indian Democracy," *Foreign Affairs*, February 5, 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/india/precarious-foundations-indian-democracy>.

⁵⁰ Kallol Bhattacharjee, "Barack Obama Says India May 'Pull Apart' over Minority Rights," *The Hindu*, June 22, 2023, sec. India, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/barack-obama-says-india-may-pull-apart-over-minority-rights/article66998819.ece>.

⁵¹ Raja M. Ali Saleem, Ihsan Yilmaz, and Priya Chacko, "Civilizationist Populism in South Asia: Turning India Saffron," *European Center for Populism Studies (ECPs)*, February 24, 2022, <https://www.populismstudies.org/civilizationist-populism-in-south-asia-turning-india-saffron/>.

⁵² Saleem, Yilmaz, and Chacko.

⁵³ "Pakistan Rejects the Indian Supreme Court's Verdict on Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir," Press Release (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan, December 11, 2023), <https://mofa.gov.pk/news/pakistan-rejects-the-indian-supreme-courts-verdict-on-indian-illegally-occupied-jammu-and-kashmir>.

right to self-determination, and this could lead to renewed conflict in the region.⁵⁴ Kashmir is regarded a nuclear flashpoint between Pakistan and India.

The heightened military presence along the India-Pakistan border raises the risk of border skirmishes and military confrontation as such developments carry the potential to escalate into more extensive conflicts, posing a threat to regional peace and stability.⁵⁵ As India is displaying greater assertiveness and nationalism under the banner of Hindutva, it could impact its nuclear posture and military doctrine.⁵⁶ This could lead to concerns about a potential arms race in South Asia, with Pakistan feeling compelled to maintain its own strategic deterrence capabilities, thereby creating an environment of instability and insecurity.⁵⁷

Hindutva's emphasis on religious and cultural exclusivity might raise concerns about India's commitment to secularism and religious pluralism, potentially affecting its diplomatic standing and strategic partnerships.⁵⁸ It may also impact India's relationship with neighboring countries, especially those with significant Muslim populations like Bangladesh and Afghanistan. This could strain diplomatic ties and regional cooperation.⁵⁹

Hindutva-influenced Modi-led BJP government's treatment of minorities and vulnerable populations within India has raised concerns internationally, leading to calls for interventions or sanctions that could further destabilize the region.⁶⁰ The focus on Hindutva by the current Modi-led BJP government and its domestic political priorities and India's unwillingness to cooperate

⁵⁴ Jon Lunn, "Kashmir: The Effects of Revoking Article 370," House of Commons Library, August 8, 2019, 370, <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/kashmir-the-effects-of-revoking-article-370/>.

⁵⁵ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Paradox of Deterrence: India-Pakistan Strategic Relations," *Strategic Studies* 29, no. 4 (2009): 46–71.

⁵⁶ "Hindu Nationalism and Nuclear Politics," Seminar Report (Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research, September 12, 2019), <https://cscr.pk/events/hindu-nationalism-and-nuclear-politics/>.

⁵⁷ "Hindu Nationalism and Nuclear Politics."

⁵⁸ Kunal Purohit, "Modi's 'Tiger Warrior' Diplomacy Is Harming India's Interests," Center for Governance Studies, August 30, 2023, <https://cgs-bd.com/article/18293/Modi%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%98Tiger-Warrior%E2%80%99-Diplomacy-Is-Harming-India%E2%80%99s-Interests>.

⁵⁹ Prashant Waikar, "Reading Islamophobia in Hindutva: An Analysis of Narendra Modi's Political Discourse," *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 4 (April 1, 2018): 161–80, <https://doi.org/10.13169/islastudj.4.2.0161>.

⁶⁰ "India: Serious Concerns Raised at UN Rights Review," Human Rights Watch, November 18, 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/11/18/india-serious-concerns-raised-un-rights-review>.

with neighboring countries, including Pakistan, in counterterrorism efforts has undermined efforts to address regional security challenges.⁶¹

Hindutva-influenced groups currently hold dominant positions across various aspects of life.⁶² Modi's boastful politics characterized by a hegemonic mindset and aspirations for supremacy over neighboring nations poses a threat to South Asian peace and stability.⁶³ This region is acknowledged as one of the most precarious in the world. The aggressive posture adopted by Narendra Modi further intensifies these challenges.

Conclusion

The roots of Hindu nationalism can be traced to 19th century movements such as Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, which advocated social and religious reforms within Hinduism. These reformist movements played a crucial role in shaping the identity of Hindus and emphasizing the sanctity of India. A pivotal moment in Hindu fundamentalism occurred with the introduction of Hindutva ideology by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in the early 20th century. This political ideology seeks to justify Hindu nationalism, envisioning a Hindu Rashtra and emphasizing the exclusivity of Indian land for Hindus. RSS, founded in 1925, became a prominent face of Hindu fundamentalism, aiming to unite Hindus and reestablish Bharatvarsha. However, the Hindutva ideology clashes with the secular principles outlined in the Indian Constitution. Articles 14, 15, 16 and 25 guarantee equal rights, non-discrimination, and freedom of choice of religion to all citizens of India, irrespective of their affiliations. Hindutva advocates Hindu-centric dominance, potentially marginalizing minorities of other religions. This clash between democratic principles and Hindutva underscores a broader debate on Indian identity, religious pluralism, and the delicate balance between individual rights and collective identity. The interplay of these elements continues to shape India's socio-political landscape. The rise of Hindutva under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has further intensified these dynamics. Domestically, marginalization of religious minorities through discriminatory laws has fuelled concerns about secular India transforming into an extremist polity threatening regional peace and stability. India's actions in IIOJK and increased military presence close to its international border with Pakistan and the Line of Control (LoC) pose

⁶¹ Jaspal, "Paradox of Deterrence."

⁶² Edward Anderson and Arkotong Longkumer, "'Neo-Hindutva': Evolving Forms, Spaces, and Expressions of Hindu Nationalism," *Contemporary South Asia* 26, no. 4 (October 2, 2018): 371–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2018.1548576>.

⁶³ Anderson and Longkumer.

threat to regional peace and stability. Given India's nuclear weapons status, the increasing extremism in India under the Modi regime as a consequence of Hindutva and the pursuit of majoritarianism, could prove to be catastrophic for the region as well as the world.