

ROLE OF *HINDUTVA* AND PRAGMATISM IN MODI'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The rise of Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi to the corridors of power has perceptibly increased Indian hostility towards Pakistan. In the domestic politics of India, Bharatiya Janata Party under Narendra Modi has vehemently supported Hindu nationalism, commonly known as Hindutva, which brushes aside the ideals of secularism forming the basis of the Indian constitution. In the foreign policy realm, Modi's government has adopted pragmatism in its relations with neighbours and the Muslim world except Pakistan. Hence there is rising Indian animosity towards Pakistan amidst the reinforced Hindu nationalism under PM Modi. The article examines role of Hindutva as well as pragmatism in Indian foreign policy under Modi from 2014 to 2019. It concludes that Hindutva is the driving force of Indian foreign policy towards Pakistan, rather than pragmatism.

Keywords: India, Secularism, Hindutva, BJP, Modi, Foreign Policy, Pakistan-India relations

Introduction

Foreign policy of a nation is meant to maximise its national interests and is a reflection of its domestic dynamics and interests. For maximizing Indian interests, Prime Minister Nehru grounded its post-independence foreign policy in the ideals of secularism and non-alignment – Nehruvian idealism.¹ During this period India earned the status of world's largest democracy, aided by its secular values and a

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¹ Anirudh Deshpande, "Revisiting Nehruvian Ideals in the Context of Contemporary Imperialism," *Political and Economic Weekly* 41, no. 52 (30 Dec, 2006)

foreign policy based on peaceful co-existence.² Non-alignment remained another celebrated component of Indian policy of this period, which was practically abandoned in the 1970s when India signed a defence pact with the Soviet Union, though in principle it continued for quite some time.

Nehru's secularism formed the ideological basis of the Indian state, in contrast to the two-nation theory of All India Muslim League (AIML), which provided the ideological basis for creation of Pakistan. The concept of 'Mother India,'- India is for all of its inhabitants regardless of their religion, caste and creed was adopted officially and constitutionally irrespective of ground realities. Although it provided some constitutional safeguards to the minorities living in India, but the Hindu majority and Hindu revivalist movements continued to work for making India a Hindu state.

This political idealism and secularism started weakening after the demise of Nehru though the Indian National Congress (INC) tried to continue with the policy but Hindu nationalists started dominating over Nehruvian policies. Indian foreign policy was no exception to these developments. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was formed in 1980 and was brought to prominence through the *Ram Janmabhoomi* movement in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh; led by BJP leaders and *Sangh Parivar* including Hindu nationalist organizations like *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS), *Bajrang Dal*, *Shiv Sena* and *Vishva Hindu Parishad* (VHP). As a corollary, the BJP emerged pre-eminently as a right-wing Hindu nationalist party³ leading the movement for the demolition of Babri Mosque in 1992. After the rise of BJP to the corridors of power under A.V. Vajpayee (1999-2004), pragmatism became a feature of Indian domestic and foreign policies. This pragmatism, based on Hindu nationalism however, strengthened the Hindu right-wing influence in politics and *Hindutva* ideology continued to flourish even under subsequent Congress' rule (2004-2014).

Since 2014, under Narendra Modi, *Hindutva* ideology seems to have started changing the very nature of Indian polity -- undermining

² The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, known as the Panchsheel Treaty: Non-interference in others internal affairs and respect for each other's territorial unity integrity and sovereignty (from Sanskrit, panch: five, sheel: virtues), are a set of principles to govern relations between states. As given as the stated foreign policy of India. "Revitalising Panchsheel," *Ministry of External Affairs*, www.mea.gov.in > [articles-in-indian-media](#) > [Revitalising+Panchsheel](#), assessed on 13/02/2020.

³ A 2009 report written by Justice Manmohan Singh Liberhan is quoted in this book on page 84. This report declared that 68 people were found responsible for the demolition of Babri Mosque. Most of them were the leaders of BJP, prominent among them were L.K. Advani, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Murli Manohar Joshi, Manooj Singh, Ram Mandir, vol. 1, (Neelkanth Prakashan,2018), https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=SGloDwAAQBAJ&sitesec=buy&source=gbs_atb, pp. 83-84, assessed on 3/02/2020.

secular ethos of the Indian constitution and challenging the survival of minorities in India. Laws like Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019⁴ and National Population Register (NPR),⁵ mainly targeting the Muslims, threaten to leave millions stateless.⁶

Although successive Indian governments adopted a tough stance towards Pakistan, but the *Hindutva* driven government of Narendra Modi has proven to be quite rigid by ruling out all avenues for rapprochement. The domestic rise of *Hindutva* ideology poses an equally serious threat to regional peace, as the intolerance towards Muslims is evidently transcending from the domestic to the external sphere -- Indian dealings with Pakistan and Kashmiris being a case in point.⁷ Indian government used the Pathankot incident⁸ as an excuse for suspending the dialogue between India and Pakistan. Later, the Pulwama attack⁹ was used as a justification to launch 'surgical strikes' against Pakistan by crossing the international border for the first time after 1971, stirring up the possibility of a direct clash between the two nuclear powers.

Since 2014, Narendra Modi has pursued a policy of isolating Pakistan in the region as well as globally. This was justified by blaming Pakistan for the indigenously motivated Kashmiri resistance movement, labelled as terrorism by India. In its 2014 election manifesto, BJP, using national security argument, pledged zero tolerance towards terrorism by

⁴ Snigdha Poonam, "The 3 Most Polarizing Words in India 'Jai Shri Ram'", *Foreign Policy*, February 13, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/13/jai-shri-ram-india-hindi/>

⁵ Bharti Jan, "NPR update begins on April 1, President to...", *Times of India*, February 17, 2020. http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/74166482.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

⁶ India Code, "Citizenship Act, 1955 - India Code," [indiacode.nic.in › bitstream › Citizenship.Act.1955](http://indiacode.nic.in/bitstream/Citizenship.Act.1955), accessed on 3/02/2020

⁷ Kashmir is a disputed territory between India and Pakistan. It is on the agenda of UN Security Council, where plebiscite was suggested to exercise the established right of self-determination of Kashmiris.

⁸ It was a terrorist attack and Indian National Security Advisor claimed that terrorist came from Pakistan. Pakistan immediately registered FIR against unknown terrorist on the basis of evidence initially provided by India and requested India to conduct joint investigation. However India called off the process of comprehensive dialogue on the pretext of this terrorist attack. Imran Gabol, "Pathankot Air Base Attack: FIR Registered in Gujranwala against Attackers, Abettors," *Dawn*, February 19, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1240574>.

⁹ It was a suicidal attack by a young Kashmiri Adil Ahmed Dar in Pulwama District of Occupied Kashmir in which 40 Indian soldiers were killed. Sameer Yasir "Tracking the Path, that led to Pulwama," *BBC News*, 1 May, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-47302467>

so-called Pakistan-backed terrorist groups.¹⁰ Before 2019 elections, while BJP showed commitment to having good relations with all neighbouring countries, it simultaneously ran a campaign to project Pakistan as a major national security threat.¹¹ His policy towards Pakistan is driven by Hindu nationalism. In contrast, Modi's pragmatism is quite pronounced in his policies towards the Muslim states of South Asia and Persian Gulf, including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Saudi Arabia (KSA), and United Arab Emirates (UAE). Further, Modi's policies towards Muslims in India and Kashmiris in Indian Occupied Kashmir turned out to be even more aggressive than in his first term (2014-2018) – clearly reflective of growing influence of *Hindutva* ideology. This anti-Muslim approach of Modi within India (influenced by *Hindutva*) is also visible in his anti-Pakistan agenda.

This study identifies *Hindutva* ideology as being the guiding principle of Modi's foreign policy vis-a-vis Pakistan, which may have devastating implications for regional peace and security. PM Modi's *Hindutva* obsession is likely to herald a fundamental change in India-Pakistan relations. Even if nuclear deterrence upholds the status-quo in India-Pakistan strategic equation, regional stability would continue to be at stake. Modi's second term in office reflects that the domestic politics would overshadow pragmatism in its policy formulation vis-à-vis Pakistan and is likely to continue if BJP wins the next elections as well. For this reason, *Hindutva* ideology must be understood for comprehending Modi's Pakistan policy.

Evolution of *Hindutva* and Hindu Nationalism

Hinduism is hard to characterize as one unified religion since it is a fusion of different offshoots and sects. Likewise, Hindus follow a variety of practices and religious beliefs, divided across regional, ethnic and cultural foundations. They worship multiple gods based on divergent interpretations of religious writings and celebrate various religious/cultural festivals based on preferred set of beliefs held in different regions and localities. This diversity calls for having a common ground for Hindu nationalism, hence the proposition of '*Hindutva*' ideology.¹² This ideology is often referred to as an Indian nationalist (right-wing religious) movement, which is considered a paradoxical phrase by different scholars. The *Hindutva* ideology also involves the

¹⁰ BJP Election Manifesto 2014 - Narendra Modi, *cdn.narendramodi.in › uploads › 2014/04 › Manifesto2014highlights*, accessed on 16/02/2020.

¹¹ Atiq Durrani, "Pakistan and Modi's Foreign Policy," *Stratagem*, 2015, <http://stratagem.pk/setting-the-record-straight/pakistan-and-modi>, accessed on 3/02/2020.

¹² An ideology seeking to establish the hegemony of Hindus and the Hindu way of life.

integration of social and political ideals advocated by *Sangh Parivar*.¹³ The prominent political branch of this *Parivar* is Bharatiya Janata Party—the modern political manifestation of *Hindutva* ideology.¹⁴ Knowing the beginning and evolution of *Hindutva* ideology is essential to comprehend India's domestic politics and BJP's domestic and foreign policies.

Swami Dayananda, who established the *Arya Samaj*,¹⁵ was known as an adept interpreter of the *Vedas* (Hindu religious text). He believed that their descent from the Aryan race – belonging to Tibetan region – was the actual reason of Hindu superiority. Thus all Hindus living in the Indian subcontinent were of a superior race that had endured despite outside incursions. Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (who opposed Gandhi's non-violence movement) was an advocate of Hindu militarism and coined the term *Hindutva*. He also went to jail because of his rebellious movement, charged of crimes against the British Crown. He penned his seminal book during detainment that provides an ideological foundation for the *Hindutva* philosophy.¹⁶ *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu* published in 1928 was his most compelling book, where he delineated the *Hindutva* philosophy and distinguished it from the traditional concept of Hinduism.¹⁷

Hindutva ideology was mainly concerned with countering two rising threats: foreign influences including British rule and proselytizing of lower caste Hindus by Christians and Muslims. This was evident in Savarkar's public addresses¹⁸ where he encouraged his supporters to battle against foreign influence and to be a true Hindu. Golwalker in his book warns the foreigners in India that:

The foreign races in Hindustan must adopt the Hindu culture and language--- must learn to respect and hold in worship the Hindu religion, must entertain no ideas but those of glorification of the Hindu race and

¹³ Martha Craven Nussbaum, *The Clash Within: Democracy, Religious Violence, and India's Future* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

¹⁴ A. Mohapatra, "Out of Saffron Ashes: Revival of Hindutva in India," Honors Thesis (Baylor University, Waco, Texas. 2016), accessed June 10, 2019. https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/baylorir/ir/bitstream/handle/2104/9744/Anuja_Mohapatra_honorsthesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

¹⁵ Arya Samaj is a monotheistic Indian Hindu reform movement that promotes values and practices based on the belief in the infallible authority of the Vedas. The Samaj was founded by the Sannyasi (ascetic) Dayanand Saraswati on 10 April 1875.

¹⁶ C. Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹⁷ Lise McKean, *Divine Enterprise: Gurus and the Hindu Nationalist Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Ibid.

culture and may only stay in the country wholly subordinated to the Hindu nation claiming nothing, not even citizen's rights.¹⁹

Hindutva is derived from Hinduism, which can be explained as 'Cultural Nationalism' since it is a blend of culture and religion. To promote Hinduism in India, there are many different conservative Hindu organizations working under different names, for example, the *Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh* (RSS) set up in mid 1920s, the *Vishwa Hindu Parishad* (VHP) formed in 1964, and the *Bharatiya Janta Party* (BJP) set up in late 1970s. In spite of working as independent entities, they back each other because of their similar beliefs and motivation. That is why with BJP's government in power, RSS assumed a central role in politics, further aided by branches like political BJP, religious VHP and social and cultural RSS according to their nature of work.²⁰

In search of Hindu religious identity, VHP has created the concept of joint Hindu nation by promoting common historical founder (Rama). It trained Hindu missionaries to preach to the Dalits and declared Ayodhya as the Hindu religious city (in an attempt to imitate Islam and Christianity).²¹ Efforts were made in different time periods to abolish the caste system and other discriminatory practices in India, but hatred against lower castes destroyed these efforts. One VHP leader Kailash Chandra wrote in *Hindu Vishwa*²² that Christian missionaries and later Muslims tried to destroy the caste system.²³ Hindu preachers smartly included Buddhists and Jains into Hinduism, even though these religions emerged as a reaction to Hindu violence against lower castes. By the efforts of Dr. Ambedkar, leader of lower caste Hindus, a large number of Dalits converted to Buddhism; however, Hindu conservatives still called them Hindus claiming that these philosophies (Buddhism and Jainism) evolved within Hindu religion.²⁴ Moreover, a large number of Dalits continued to register as Hindu, despite having converted to other religions to avail quotas in jobs, free schooling facility etc. provided by the Indian Constitution.

¹⁹ M.S. Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined* (Bharat Publications, 1939).

²⁰ M. Katju, *Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Indian Politics* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Ltd, 2003).

²¹ R. Thapar, "Some Thoughts On The Present Situation," in *Communalism, Civil Society and The State*, by K. Pannikar and S. Muralidhara (New Delhi: Safdar Hashmi Memorial Trust, 2003).

²² Jagdish Chandra Sharda Shastri, *Memoirs of a Global Hindu* (New Delhi: Vishwa Niketan, 2008), 23-27

²³ K. Chandra, *Soya Bharat chete' (India should wake up)*, (*Hindu Vishwa*, January 1990): 13-14.

²⁴ M. Katju, *Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Indian Politics* (Hyderabad: Orient Longman Ltd, 2003).

BJP politicians tried to increase their influence over other communities and engender a uniform Hindu culture for their political gains. Previously, Hindu extremists used the excuse of civilising other communities to suppress their culture, calling them *Vanyasis* (residents of jungle) instead of *Adiyasis* (original inhabitants).²⁵ These right-wing organizations taught people in villages about Hinduism. They also brainwashed children in Hindu temples and residential schools to accept the Hindu lifestyle. In the past decade, Christian organizations in tribal areas have been attacked by these extremists. They believe that conversion to any foreign religion and its preaching is against Hinduism and the native culture.²⁶

Contrarily, Gandhi's non-violence doctrine and Nehru's way of governing through the Indian National Congress (INC) forged a different kind of nationalism (based on pluralism, democracy, socialism and secularism) called "the Nehru Consensus".²⁷ Despite being against the beliefs of radical and racist right wing philosophy of *Hindutva*, Nehru's secularism remained very popular for the early decades of Indian history.²⁸

Between 1948 and 1950, RSS was banned, thousands of its members arrested, and others went underground, due to violent activities and connections with Gandhi's assassination.²⁹ Later RSS developed again by restoring its branches and tried reshaping the society under Hindu principles by taking less radical positions under Golwalker's guidance (who did not support RSS participation in politics).³⁰

For decades, the principles of *Hindutva* remained active within a secular democracy, and were partly used by INC and its allies to appeal to

²⁵ Zubaida Zafar, Shoukat Ali, and Sheeba Irfan, "Origin of 'Hindutva' and Its Reflections in Modi's Doctrine," *Journal of Indian Studies*, (July-December 2018), 3.

²⁶ C. Shah, "Ideology, Strategies, and the Experience of Gujarat," *Warning Signs of Fundamentalisms* 9(2004): 61-70.

²⁷ "Nehruvian Consensus under Siege," *The Hindu*, November 14, 2019, www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/nehruvian-consensus-under-siege/article29965455.ece; Sirijan Mitra Das, "Modi Model, a Break from 'Nehruvian Consensus'?" *The Times of India*, May 28, 2014, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Modi-model-A-break-from-Nehruvian-Consensus/articleshow/35649672.cms>.

²⁸ S.W. Hibbard, *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

²⁹ T.B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

³⁰ A. Mohapatra, "Out of Saffron Ashes: Revival of Hindutva in India," Honors Thesis, (Baylor University, Waco, Texas. 2016), https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/baylorir/bitstream/handle/2104/9744/Anuja_Mohapatra_honorsthesis.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y, accessed on 12/02/2020.

the Hindu vote bank for ensuring electoral victories. The electoral outcomes till 1990s show that extremist parties like RSS could not inspire the voters at a massive scale, thereby *Hindutva* could not find much space in Indian secular democracy.³¹

Pragmatism vs *Hindutva* Ideology under BJP's Rise and Rule

The Concept of Pragmatism

In the literal sense, pragmatism describes the philosophy of "doing what works best."³² In political philosophy, pragmatism is a concept put forward by an American school of thought that evaluates beliefs and theories on the basis of their success after practical application. Peirce is known as the father of pragmatism, while John Dewey and William James played an important role in its refinement and popularization. Britannica explains it as a philosophy that gained popularity in the first quarter of twentieth century based on the principle that the usefulness, workability, and practicality of ideas, policies, and proposals are the criteria of their merit. It stresses the priority of action over doctrine, of experience over fixed principles, and it holds that ideas borrow their meanings from their consequences and their truths from their verification. Thus, ideas are essentially instruments and plans of action.³³

The opposite of this concept of pragmatism is idealism. John Dewey rejected dualistic epistemology in favour of the naturalistic approach in modern philosophy. He believed that human beings should actively adapt to their environment. In the Indian context, a 'pragmatic' approach to foreign policy means the rejection of Nehruvian 'idealism'. A pragmatic leader would pursue power and material interests instead of continuing India's earlier reliance on 'moral posturing'. The rise of BJP to power was considered as reinforcing pragmatism in Indian politics by pursuing a realistic foreign policy capable of overcoming the gaps left by the idealism of earlier decades. Even in the current scenario, Indian media considers PM Modi as a pragmatic leader capable of bringing radical changes to Indian foreign policy by dispensing with idealism. The idea that power of the government should be used for establishing a Hindu state – Hindustan for Hindus – is the goal of those supporting this approach. Thus the inadvertent consequence of BJP's rise to power was the rise of

³¹ T.B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*.

³² Dictionary Definition: Vocabulary.com, [www.vocabulary.com › dictionary › pragmatic](http://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/pragmatic), accessed on January 15, 2020.

³³ Encyclopaedia Britannica, "The Classical Pragmatists," <https://www.britannica.com/topic/pragmatism-philosophy/The-classical-pragmatists>, accessed on January 15, 2020.

Hindutva ideology, which the Congress leadership's secularist slogans had been denying all along;³⁴ even today under PM Modi, it is *Hindutva* in the guise of pragmatism that is becoming the core of Indian domestic policies as BJP has provided a conducive environment for its flourishing.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the BJP re-energised *Hindutva* within Indian politics. BJP challenged the secular model of Indian National Congress and gradually started giving a tough opposition to the ruling alliance. BJP came with an economic agenda and gathered popular vote to execute its reform program, while not keeping *Hindutva* on the back seat. Although, BJP leaders had previously supported anti-Muslim violence such as the demolition of the Babri Mosque in 1992, but it succeeded in forming its national government in the late-1990s. BJP managed to execute economic reforms in the provinces it ruled – this helped the BJP-led alliance to gain a majority in 2002 and 2014 elections. In the case of PM Modi, in all of his election campaigns, Modi avoided communal speeches and adopted a moderate approach, downplaying radical *Hindutva* ideology.³⁵ He rather played on the slogans of stability and economic development. Contrarily, in 2019 elections, BJP won an overwhelming majority using anti-Pakistan rhetoric and promoting *Hindutva* sentiments within India.

After successful implementation of *Hindutva* driven policies as the Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2002, Modi used that confidence to transform India into a Hindu religious state under this ideology after gaining national level electoral victory in 2014. Since the BJP sponsored National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won clear-cut majority in 2014 elections, it confirmed that the idea of pragmatic redefinition of internal and external policies was sold successfully to the masses. In his second term, Modi is more confident in taking ownership of his *Hindutva* beliefs while openly rejecting Nehruvian ideology; accusing it of neglecting Indian national interests and holding it responsible for serious foreign policy failures and diplomatic losses which weakened India.

A clear majority of the Indian population bought BJP's political and economic vision as it represented the dream of making India a powerful state on the world stage. Besides subscribing to the *Hindutva* creed, Modi remained pragmatic in his approach towards development. Since 2014, economy has been the government's top-most priority, and successful economic growth has allowed easy execution of more aggressive and amoral policies. Under Modi, India's foreign policy formulation has completely deviated from the patterns of earlier years-- along with a shift from idealism to realism, the impact of Indian bureaucracy and

³⁴ "Pragmatism in Indian Foreign Policy: How Ideas Constrain Modi," *International Affairs*, 93(1) (January 2017) doi: 10.1093/ia/iiv001.

³⁵ A. Mohapatra, "Out of Saffron Ashes: Revival of Hindutva in India."

intelligentsia has become dismal. In domestic policymaking, *Hindutva's* influence has increased manifold.³⁶

Since Modi has come into power, fear has risen in Indian minorities as growing intolerance and the new norm of communal violence threatens the ethnic minorities. Many social activists and members of civil society, who believe the communal politics of BJP to be the reason behind religious violence, have raised voices against this. The Ayodhya Movement of the 1990s, the demolition of Babri mosque, and Gujarat riots in early 2000s by Hindu nationalist organisations were the instances of communal brutality³⁷ smartly exploited by the BJP. The history of Hindu-Muslim rivalry was largely exploited by the BJP: it used communal violence as a political tool to increase BJP's vote bank as *Hindutva* ideology portrays the ethnic minorities as threats to Hindu identity. Ever since, India has been transformed into a hell for minorities and a threat for Pakistan, reinforcing the latter's belief in two nation theory.

Given the domestic popularity of NDA's economic liberalization agenda (the larger reason for its 2019 re-election), the sitting regime needs to prove its economic worth – BJP direly needs to take effective measures for poverty alleviation and rural development. Indian politics, by and large, has become a two party system with power alternating between INC and BJP. BJP's emphasis on *Hindutva* ideology in domestic affairs, and steps such as actions against liberal actors, beef bans and communal violence, may lead to changes in the voting trend as manifested by BJP losses in recent elections in Bihar and Delhi. This indicates a tough future competition between BJP and Congress.

In considering the reasons for the revival of *Hindutva* ideology in India and its political mainstreaming, several explanations are proposed. A popular academic notion about *Hindutva's* rise in India is its re-emergence as a reaction to globalisation whose devastating effects created gaps in the political sphere for extremists. The revival of religious politics is a worldwide trend, e.g. rise of conservative Christian groups in the US and of conservative Muslims in Egypt.³⁸ In India, the minorities' rights movements of the 1980s and 1990s are considered another reason for *Hindutva's* revival. Moreover, communal issues including the 1980s Sikh separatist struggle in Punjab and the Kashmiris' struggle for self-determination apparently further provoked Hindu nationalism in Indian

³⁶ A. Mohapatra, "Out of Saffron Ashes: Revival of Hindutva in India."

³⁷ T.B. Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India*.

³⁸ C. Kinnvall, *Globalization and Religious Nationalism in India: The Search for Ontological Security* (New York: Routledge, 2006; S.W. Hibbard, *Religious Politics and Secular States: Egypt, India, and the United States* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010)

society. However, the coherent effort which paved the way for BJP's rise was the *Ram Janambhoomi* campaign to rebuild the temple of Ayodhya in the place of Babri mosque.

Additionally, a few scholars attribute the rise of BJP to the decline of Congress (in the 1970s and more particularly, the 1980s), which created a political vacuum that was filled by BJP emerging as a strong opposition. India's corporate sponsored-democracy where any party can get power through political patronage can also be counted as a reason for BJP's rise that is skilled enough to grab elite's attention and patronage. The above listed factors have been identified as short-term factors by few scholars and most credit for BJP's success goes to its economic policies and ideology of Hindu nationalism.³⁹ *Hindutva* as an ideology is not only active on the domestic front, but has also made inroads into Modi's foreign policy initiatives and responses towards Pakistan.

Guiding Principles of Modi's Foreign Policy

As identified earlier, pragmatism and *Hindutva* ideology are the two guiding principles of Indian foreign policy under PM Modi, of which the latter is predominantly followed when dealing with Pakistan. Modi has adopted an 'India first' approach – the first priority being the strengthening of national power according to realist paradigm. For that end, he overcame the hesitation to make radical foreign policy changes. India's 'Look East' policy' proclaimed in 1993 was transformed into an 'Act East Policy' under PM Modi displaying his pragmatism.⁴⁰ This was reflected in his economic development plan as well, focusing on having increased international trade and internal reforms to attract foreign direct investment. Lowering of trade barriers, demonetization to control black money, and tax reform have been enacted to make India a business friendly economy.

Despite Modi's non-impressive record of economic performance, India emerged as the fastest growing economy under his leadership; growth rate increased to around seven percent from that of four percent per annum before 2014. Bureaucratic hurdles were also eradicated to make India more business friendly, helping it to rise by 65 places in the World Bank's 'ease of doing business' rankings.⁴¹ International trade ties

³⁹ Kenchen Chandra, "Why Ethnic, Parties Succeed," *E-scholarship*, December 20, 2003, <https://escholarship.org/content/qt0vb620b2/qt0vb620b2.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Suresh Parabhu, "Indian Commerce Minister Defined This Policy as an Effort to Increase India's Commercial Ties with The Eastern Neighbours, while Talking to Press in ASEAN-India Summit," Youtube, January 26, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=805YurMaHzA>.

⁴¹ "How has India's economy fared under PM Narendra Modi?" *DW*, <https://www.dw.com/en/how-has-indias-economy-fared-under-pm-narendra-modi/a-48251747>, accessed on February 10, 2020.

were improved not only for economic dividends but for maneuvering against China. Also, India managed to develop good relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Israel at the same time, for both economic and political gains. One more characteristic of Modi's pragmatism is to attract Indian diaspora by strengthening relations with non-resident Indians and Indian-origin communities abroad.

Simultaneously, Modi administration is keen to promote India's religious and cultural identity, as it is a way of showing adherence to *Hindutva* for the BJP. Though the direct impact of these religious and cultural connections on Modi's foreign policy may be subtle, but it is important. Narendra Modi is personally known as taking Hindu beliefs and traditions very seriously. His decision of contesting election for parliamentary seat from Varanasi, a religious pilgrimage city about 800 miles from his native Gujarat where he has never lived, shows his attachment with *Hindutva* ideology.⁴² The first post-election specific policy announcement by PM Modi was to clean up the sacred, yet toxically polluted, River Ganges.⁴³ He thus has a direct appeal for those who appreciate India's Hindu identity in the comity of nations.

Modi's Policy towards Pakistan

The shift in Indian foreign policy towards Pakistan became evident soon after Modi's election. Initially, there was a display of cordiality when the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif accepted the invitation to participate in the new Indian Prime Minister's oath-taking ceremony in 2014. However, later the Indian PM refused to participate in a foreign secretary level dialogue scheduled to be held in Islamabad around that time. Soon afterwards, Ajit Kumar Doval, former chief of the Intelligence Bureau, was appointed as national security adviser to the Prime Minister of India.⁴⁴ No significant improvement in bilateral ties has been witnessed since then.

Keeping in view the mutual hostility between India and Pakistan, the future bilateral equation might see either a maintenance of status-quo, or a further deterioration of ties. However, relations between the two countries dipped after an exchange of air strikes in February 2019 and India's unilateral adventurism in Indian Occupied Kashmir in August 2019

⁴² In 2014 Modi contested elections from Vadodara in Gujarat, and Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh. He won both but chose the Varanasi seat rather than the one from his own state.

⁴³ Archana Chaudhary, and Rakteem Katekey, "Modi Invokes Mahatma Gandhi to Clean Mother Ganga," *Bloomberg*, 28 May, 2014, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-05-27/india-s-new-leader-channels-gandhi-to-clean-mother-ganga>.

⁴⁴ Doval is one of the founding members of the Vivekananda International Foundation- a group of right-wing Hindu nationalists closely linked to RSS.

(revocation of article 370 of Indian constitution).⁴⁵ Since India has not reciprocated Pakistan's peace gestures such as the safe return of Indian Air force pilot and offering investigations and cooperation over all Indian claims of Pakistan's involvement in various incidents, the possibility for Indo-Pak rapprochement under Modi regime appears meagre.

Unfortunately, recent and evolving trends reinforce the second possibility, i.e. deterioration of ties. This time around, under the robust influence of *Hindutva* ideology, the conflict situation has become far more intense and protracted than Kargil or the 2001-2002 standoff. The Modi government continues to adopt anti-Pakistan policies which include: non-engagement with Pakistan at bilateral or multilateral levels, revoking the MFN (Most Favoured Nation) status, boycotting the 19th SAARC summit hosted by Pakistan, and abandoning of sports and cultural exchange activities – all these contradict the essence of confidence building measure (CBMs)⁴⁶ agreed in the 1999 Lahore Agreement. Modi's reference to Balochistan in his speech on Independence Day in 2016, and blaming Pakistan for the Uri attack in September 2016, all point towards Modi's extreme stance towards Pakistan. Similarly, India blamed Pakistan for Pulwama attack on its para-military forces in Indian occupied Kashmir, making it a justification for Balakot airstrikes in February 2019. Prior to these, the arrest and trial of Indian spy Kalbhushan Jadhav complicated the situation.⁴⁷ All these manifest a constantly deteriorating relationship.

India's strategy aims at developing bilateral relations with extended neighbours like Iran and Afghanistan, so as to encircle Pakistan. There are clear evidences of Indian interference in Balochistan using Afghan soil, as mentioned in Modi's speech.⁴⁸ Projects like development of the Chabahar Port in response to the Gwadar Port was an attempt to increase India's maritime navigation in international waters and to counter Pakistan-China strategic cooperation.

There is least possibility of improving relations under PM Modi unless third parties such as the United States or China offer help, and given

⁴⁵ Modi government revoked Article 370 granting special status to Occupied Kashmir and declared it a part of Indian union. To avoid Kashmiris' reaction, India imposed locked down on 8 million people, badly hampering their access to food, medicines, education, telephone and internet services.

⁴⁶ Naeem Ahmad Salik, "Confidence Building Measures between India and Pakistan," *NDU Journal*, 2010.

⁴⁷ A. Ranjan, "Assessing Modi's Neighbours First Policy," *Daily Times*, June 5, 2017, accessed on May 20, 2019. <https://dailytimes.com.pk/8242/assessing-modis-neighbours-first-policy>.

⁴⁸ Manu Balachandran, "Balochistan is now officially an Arrow in India's Quiver against Pakistan," *QZ*, September 16, 2016, <https://qz.com/india/782147/narendra-modis-message-to-the-un-balochistan-is-now-officially-an-arrow-in-indias-quiver-against-pakistan/>.

that India accepts such an offer for mediation. As a matter of fact, the Indian foreign policy towards Pakistan has not been friendly for the greater part of history, but Modi's approach towards Pakistan is ever-more aggressive since his pragmatism is overridden by his *Hindutva* driven beliefs in the case of Pakistan.

Conclusion

Modi's obsessive adherence to *Hindutva* ideology since 2014 has worsened India-Pakistan relations, cutting down any pathways for improvement that could be found under Nehruvian idealism despite recurring tensions. This study concludes that India has selectively followed idealism and secularism in its external and internal policies. But with the rise of BJP to power, its internal policies began to be directed by religious elements to bolster its status as a Hindu state for the political consumption of the domestic audience. Particularly under the Modi regime, whereas in external relations Modi managed to appear pragmatic in dealing with the rest of the world but in the case of Pakistan his extremist *Hindutva*-inspired policies became quite evident. PM Modi in his first term worked to strengthen India's economy to attract FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) and world-wide trading relations - significant not only economically but also strategically- but consistently avoided mending ties with Pakistan. It also improved relations with other South Asian states in its effort to isolate Pakistan.

Confident of India's reliable economic and political relations with all these countries, Modi's pragmatism found the right time to aggressively impose *Hindutva* both domestically and in its relations with Pakistan after 2019. This is evident in Modi government's move to annex Kashmir under the Indian Union in sheer violation of both the Indian constitution and UN Security Council resolutions. It is also extending its claim to Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan which is very provocative and India never did it before. Extreme human rights violations have been committed in Occupied Kashmir by locking down eight million Kashmiris, while the UN, the major powers and the Muslim world have failed collectively to serve the cause of humanity, as it might come at the cost of their vital economic relationship with India. Modi's government, being pragmatic, probably anticipated a weak response - with only voices being raised from a few official forums in solidarity with Pakistan. The evolving scenario is disconcerting as India has suspended bilateral engagement with Pakistan. Hence, there is a rising threat of war where an indefinite standoff may escalate into a nuclear exchange - if this happens, it is not only South Asian peace but the entire humanity that is at stake.

