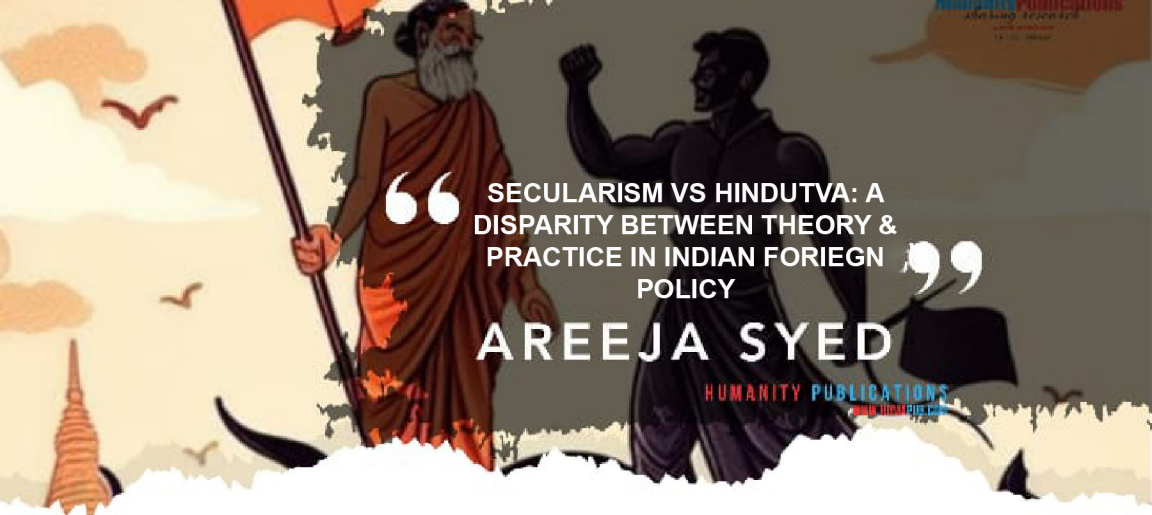


SECULARISM VS HINDUTVA

A DISPARITY BETWEEN THEORY & PRACTICE IN INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY

EDITED BY
AREEJA SYED



“ SECULARISM VS HINDUTVA: A
DISPARITY BETWEEN THEORY &
PRACTICE IN INDIAN FOREIGN
POLICY ”

AREEJA SYED

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Chapters

- 1- Secularism vs. Hindutva Paradox in India's Foreign Policy
(Areeja Syed).
- 2- Strategic Thinking and Rising Populism in Indian Society – Tracing the Roots of Hindutva Ideology.
(Shams uz Zaman)
- 3- Modi Supporting Hindutva Ideology Through Promoting Anti-Secular Policies for 2014-2019.
(Hajra Nasir Satti)
- 4- Modi's India & Discrimination against the Muslim Community since 2019
(Sanwal Hussain Khari & Arhama Siddiq)
- 5- Hindutva Discourse of Modi Government and Its Impacts on Indo-Pak Relations
(Kinza Shaheen & Javeria Javed)

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Acknowledgement

My sincerest thanks to all the esteemed writers who came together to author a book that addresses a pressing dispute of today's time. The work brings to light the threats posed by Hindutva in India, a proud secular and progressive nation. The book claims international fame by exploring the global impact of Hindutva on the political scenario. The gradual but steady rise of Hindutva in a country famous for its diversity and secularism, poses an imminent danger. The collaborative effort of the authors to fathom this intricate issue is highly admirable, and their valuable insights contribute immensely to our perceptions of the socio-political dynamics at work. The book serves as a beneficial resource for those who endeavour for an in-depth understanding of the challenges encountered by India as she navigates through the difficulties of preserving its secular identity. I am particularly obliged to each author for dedicating time, knowledge, and verve to tackle this formidable issue. Their commitment to illuminate the effects of Hindutva not only on the Indian populace but also on global politics manifest their fervor for knowledge and consciousness. I would also like to offer my earnest regards to Humanity Publications for cultivating a culture of research in the domain of social sciences. The publication is colossally dedicated to uphold the research excellence which guarantees that the findings offered in the book are contemplative and relevant beyond the present research context. Humanity Publications plays a pivotal role in putting forward the valuable insights with ramifications that transcends the confines of academic discourse by contextualizing the research within the wider body of knowledge. The publication house has cultivated creative environment of research that is highly instrumental in addressing imperative social issues, akin to the one explored in this significant book. Once again, my heartfelt gratitude to all the authors and Humanity Publications for their precious contributions to deepen our understanding of the challenges posed by Hindutva in India and its global implications.

Areeja Syed

Research Scholar,
School of Politics and International Studies,
University of Hull, Kingston upon Hull, UK.



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Editor's Introduction

Areeja Syed has completed her Masters in "International Politics" from University of Hull, UK. She has done MS in "International Relations" from COMSATS University Islamabad. She has numerous contributions and Publications in National and International forum on the topics of International Relations, South Asian Foreign Policy, Soft Power and Religious Tourism. The subject of International Relations has always been her focus of interest. She is also serving "Global Political Review" journal as Asst. Managing Editor from 2019 till date.



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Editor Note

This book, titled "Secularism vs Hindutva: A Disparity between Theory and Practice in Indian Foreign Policy," delves into the intricate interplay between these ideologies within the context of India's external relations. It seeks to unravel the tensions, contradictions, and paradoxes that arise when the principles of secularism, enshrined in India's Constitution, intersect with the rising influence of Hindutva ideology in shaping the country's foreign policy decisions.

As the editor of this compilation, my intent is not to present a one-sided narrative or to pass judgment on the choices made by policymakers. Rather, it is to foster a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics at play and to encourage thoughtful discourse on the challenges and opportunities that arise when religious and nationalist fervor intersect with the pursuit of international interests.

In the chapters that follow, renowned scholars, experts, and analysts with diverse perspectives will scrutinize the evolution of India's foreign policy from both historical and contemporary vantage points. They will dissect key milestones, decisions, and diplomatic maneuvers that reflect the complex intermingling of secular ideals and Hindutva aspirations. By doing so, we hope to shed light on whether there exists a disparity between the theoretical foundations of India's secular ethos and the practical manifestations of its foreign policy actions.

It is important to acknowledge that this book does not aim to provide definitive answers, for the issues it explores are often imbued with nuance and subjectivity. Instead, our goal is to contribute to a more informed and enlightened discourse on a subject of critical importance, not only for India but for the broader global community. In an era characterized by both profound connectivity and ideological divergence, understanding the ways in which a nation reconciles its internal complexities with its external engagements can provide valuable insights into the ever-evolving landscape of international relations.

The first chapter titled "Strategic Thinking and Rising Populism in Indian Society – Tracing the Roots of Hindutva Ideology" delves into the historical and socio-political context that contributed to the emergence and rise of Hindutva ideology. We explore the roots of this ideology, tracing its evolution from historical movements and social trends. Through an analysis of the socio-



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economic factors, political shifts, and cultural dynamics, we provide readers with an understanding of how Hindutva gained traction over the years. This chapter seeks to bridge the gap between historical developments and the current ideological landscape, offering insights into the driving forces behind the popularity of Hindutva in contemporary Indian society.

The second chapter titled “Narendra Modi’s Government Policies against Muslims from 2014 to 2019” explores that this period marked a significant juncture in India’s political landscape, with Narendra Modi assuming office as the 14th Prime Minister of the country. His tenure was characterized by a series of policy decisions and political maneuvers that raised questions about the relationship between secularism and Hindutva ideology in the context of Indian foreign policy. This chapter delves into the ways in which the Modi government’s actions during these years appeared to support Hindutva principles at the expense of secularism, thus influencing India’s foreign policy trajectory. Here, we analyze the policies implemented during Modi’s first term in office that align with Hindutva ideology, and how these policies interact with the nation’s secular framework. We shed light on the implications of these policy shifts for India’s commitment to pluralism and inclusivity.

The third chapter delves into the key policies implemented by the Modi government from 2019 onwards and examines their impact on Muslim communities in India. It is essential to approach this topic with a balanced perspective, considering both the intended goals of the policies and the concerns raised by various stakeholders. Since assuming office in 2014, Narendra Modi’s tenure as the Prime Minister of India has been marked by various policy initiatives that have had significant implications for the country’s diverse population.

The fourth chapter, “Impacts of Hindutva Policies on Indo-Pak Relations,” meticulously scrutinizes the influence of Hindutva discourse propagated by the Modi government on the delicate relations between India and Pakistan. In a region marred by historical conflicts and simmering tensions, the ideological underpinnings of political rhetoric can have profound consequences on the diplomatic course of events. As this chapter navigates the historical trajectory of Hindutva, it unravels the ideological contours that have shaped India’s foreign policy decisions, highlighting the evolving interplay between cultural identity and national aspirations on the global stage.



As we draw the curtain on this exploration of the intricate interplay between secularism and Hindutva in Indian foreign policy, we find ourselves standing at the crossroads of ideology, diplomacy, and identity. The journey through the chapters of this book has been both enlightening and thought-provoking, offering a multifaceted view of a complex issue that lies at the heart of India's domestic and international dynamics. The narratives presented herein illuminate the challenges, contradictions, and opportunities that arise when the theoretical foundations of secularism encounter the practical realities of foreign policy decisions influenced by Hindutva ideology.

As we conclude this discourse, it is imperative to recognize that the subject at hand is not one to be resolved definitively within these pages. Rather, it is a conversation that will continue to evolve as India traverses its path on the global stage. The dynamic interplay of secularism and Hindutva in Indian foreign policy encapsulates the nation's aspirations, dilemmas, and aspirations. It underscores the profound challenge of preserving a pluralistic ethos while honoring a resurgent cultural identity.

In embracing this complexity, we endeavor to shed light on the nuanced landscape that policymakers, scholars, and citizens alike must navigate. We invite readers to continue this journey beyond these words, to engage in the ongoing discourse that shapes India's foreign policy and, by extension, its role in the community of nations. For, in the end, it is this very discourse that nurtures the evolution of a nation's identity, its values, and its place in a rapidly changing world.

Areeja Syed

University of Hull, Kingston upon Hull, UK.



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Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Secularism vs. Hindutva Paradox in India's Foreign Policy	1-15
Chapter 2	Strategic Thinking and Rising Populism in Indian Society – Tracing the Roots of Hindutva Ideology.	16-46
Chapter 3	Modi Supporting Hindutava Ideology Through Promoting Anti-Secular Policies for 2014-2019	47-67
Chapter 4	Modi's India & Discrimination against the Muslim Community since 2019	68-91
Chapter 5	Hindutva Discourse of Modi Government and Its Impacts on Indo-Pak Relations	92-120



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Chapter 1

Secularism vs. Hindutva Paradox in India's Foreign Policy

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Abstract: Secularism is a term use to separate Religion from all the civil affairs. It states that religion is a personal choice of every individual and everyone has a right to enjoy and practice their religious beliefs. Constitution of India also declare her a secular State. That means they do not follow any religion and no religion has a priority over other and hence will not influence the state decision making. The rise of Hindutva in India shows that there is a disparity in theory and practice in Indian policy. Constitution of India shows it a secular state but state policies are somehow influenced by Hindutva policies. This Chapter points out some of the elements of Hindutva in Indian Policies and how this term influences not only Indian domestic policies but also its relations with neighboring states particularly Pakistan.

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Authors:

Areeja Syed:

Masters, International Politics, University of Hull, UK.

About the Author:

Areeja Syed has done MS in International Relations from COMSATS University Islamabad. She has also done Masters in "International Politics" from University of Hull, U.K in 2023. She has worked as Asst. Managing editor in Global Political review and has a lot of contribution and Publications in international and National Platforms to her credit. Her Area of Interests revolves around Soft Power, Religious Tourism and Indian Foreign Policy.

She can be reached at: areejasyed@hotmail.com



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Chapter 1

Secularism vs. Hindutva Paradox in India's Foreign Policy

Areeja Syed (Editor)



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Abstract: Secularism is a term use to separate Religion from all the civil affairs. It states that religion is a personal choice of every individual and everyone has a right to enjoy and practice their religious beliefs. Constitution of India also declare her a secular State. That means they do not follow any religion and no religion has a priority over other and hence will not influence the state decision making. The rise of Hindutva in India shows that there is a disparity in theory and practice in Indian policy. Constitution of India shows it a secular state but state policies are somehow influenced by Hindutva policies. This Chapter points out some of the elements of Hindutva in Indian Policies and how this term influences not only Indian domestic policies but also its relations with neighboring states particularly Pakistan.

Keywords: Secularism, Hindutva, Foreign Policy

The juxtaposition of secularism and Hindutva within the context of India's foreign policy creates a fascinating paradox that reflects the intricate interplay between domestic ideology and international relations. India, as a diverse nation with a rich tapestry of cultures, religions, and traditions, has long prided itself on its secular democratic foundation, enshrining the principle of religious neutrality in its constitution. However, the emergence of Hindutva, a Hindu nationalist ideology that advocates for a more pronounced role of Hindu culture and values in public life, has introduced a new dynamic into the equation. This paradox lies at the heart of India's diplomatic engagements on the global stage, where the nation's commitment to secularism is juxtaposed with the growing influence of Hindutva both domestically and, inevitably, in its interactions with the world. This intricate interplay between principles of secular governance and the political ascendancy of Hindutva ideologies raises intriguing questions about the congruence of India's internal values with its external actions, underscoring the complexities that underpin the nation's foreign policy decisions.



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In a world that has become increasingly interconnected and interdependent, the realm of foreign policy holds paramount significance for every nation. It is a delicate dance of diplomacy, strategy, and national interest on the global stage. For a nation as diverse and complex as India, with its rich tapestry of cultures, religions, and languages, the formulation and execution of foreign policy demand a nuanced approach that resonates with the ideals of its democratic foundation. The dichotomy between secularism and Hindutva (Hindu nationalism) has emerged as a defining theme that not only shapes India's domestic landscape but also reverberates in its engagements with the world.

India, as a nation of staggering diversity and profound historical depth, has long grappled with the task of harmonizing its myriad identities, cultures, and beliefs. Secularism, enshrined in the Constitution, was intended to be the guiding light that would illuminate the path toward unity and tolerance. Yet, as it has been discovered, the emergence of Hindutva ideology has introduced an additional dimension to this narrative. It is a narrative rooted in a fervent yearning for cultural continuity, an assertion of India's ancient heritage, and a desire for a reinvigorated national identity.

While navigating this landscape, one must acknowledge the spectrum of perspectives that exist. Some view the integration of Hindutva into foreign policy as an assertion of India's unique identity and a means to bolster its global standing. Others, however, express reservations, fearing that such a blending may undermine India's secular ideals and contribute to a narrative of exclusion, both within and beyond its borders. These contrasting viewpoints underscore the need for open dialogue and critical engagement to steer the nation's course on the global stage.

The task before India's policymakers is undoubtedly challenging. Balancing the aspiration for a distinctive identity with the duty to uphold pluralism and inclusivity requires deft diplomacy and an unwavering commitment to democratic principles. The disparity between theory and practice, between the ideals of secularism and the influence of Hindutva ideology, invites us to reflect on the delicate equilibrium that must be maintained. This equilibrium extends not only to the nation's external relations but also to its internal cohesion, as foreign policy decisions reverberate within the social fabric of the country.

Populism and Hindutva's Strategic Origins

The rise of populism in India is a complex phenomenon with a long history. Some of the key factors that have contributed to this trend include growing

economic uncertainty, a sense of cultural displacement, and the rise of social media. One of the most important ideological currents that has shaped the rise of populism in India is Hindutva. Hindutva is a form of right-wing nationalism that promotes the idea of a Hindu nation. It has its roots in the early 20th century, but it has gained increasing prominence in recent years.

Hindutva ideologues argue that India is a Hindu nation and that its culture and values are under threat from foreign influences. They often scapegoat minority groups, such as Muslims and Christians, for India's problems. The rise of Hindutva has had a significant impact on Indian politics. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a Hindu nationalist party, has been in power since 2014. The BJP has implemented a number of policies that have been seen as discriminatory against minority groups. The rise of populism and Hindutva in India is a serious threat to the country's secular democracy. It is important to understand the roots of these trends in order to effectively counter them.

The origins of Hindutva ideology can be traced to the socio-political milieu of early 20th-century India, a period marked by colonial rule and the rising fervor for independence (Tuteja & Grewal, [1992](#)). Emerging as a response to the challenges posed by foreign domination and religious conversions, Hindutva sought to crystallize a sense of Hindu identity as a unifying force against perceived threats. Central to this ideology was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, whose seminal work "Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?" provided a framework for the reconceptualization of Hinduism beyond a mere religious belief (Savarkar, [2019](#)), embracing it as a comprehensive cultural and national identity. This ideological paradigm was forged against the backdrop of a divided society struggling to reconcile its diverse religious and cultural tapestry with the need for unity in the face of colonial oppression. The seeds of Hindutva, sown during this tumultuous period, have since evolved, interweaving historical narratives, religious symbolism, and political aspirations to create an ideology that continues to shape not only domestic discourse but also India's foreign policy landscape.

The ascendancy of Hindutva ideology is closely intertwined with the broader global phenomenon of rising populism and the ascendancy of identity politics (Velasco, [2020](#)). As economic disparities, cultural dislocation, and perceived marginalization fueled discontent among sections of Indian society, a yearning for a sense of belonging and identity took root. Hindutva capitalized on these sentiments by positioning itself as a unifying force that transcended the boundaries of religion, encompassing a broader cultural, historical, and national

narrative. This metamorphosis from a religious belief to an all-encompassing identity offered an avenue for individuals to express their grievances and aspirations through a collective Hindu framework. Identity politics, therefore, became a powerful vehicle for channeling societal discontent into a cohesive movement, one that not only aimed to safeguard religious interests but also promised a resurgence of India's cultural heritage and self-esteem (Orjuela, [2014](#)). This amalgamation of populist sentiment and identity politics generated a socio-political force that resonated deeply with certain sections of the Indian populace, reshaping domestic dynamics and, inevitably, influencing the contours of Indian foreign policy decisions.

The ascent of Hindutva ideology has indelibly left its mark on India's strategic thinking and foreign policy calculus. The confluence of nationalist fervor and identity-based assertions has wielded significant influence in shaping diplomatic priorities and international engagements. In navigating the complex realm of foreign relations, India has often weighed its domestic commitments to Hindu cultural and religious heritage against the exigencies of regional stability and geopolitical maneuvering. Notably, the interface between Hindutva ideology and strategic considerations has manifested in relations with neighboring countries, where concerns for the welfare of Hindu communities and shared cultural heritage have at times converged with broader diplomatic objectives. Yet, this interplay is not devoid of challenges, as the intermingling of identity-driven imperatives with the pragmatic requirements of statecraft can give rise to complex and delicate diplomatic scenarios. Thus, the dynamic interplay between Hindutva ideology and strategic thinking underscores the nuanced and intricate nature of India's foreign policy landscape, where the aspirations of a diverse populace intersect with the imperatives of global engagement.

Further, Hindutva ideology's emphasis on India's historical cultural legacy has galvanized a renewed sense of nationalism and assertiveness on the global stage. The belief in the continuity of an ancient civilization and the inherent exceptionalism of Indian heritage has nurtured a conviction that India deserves a central role in the international community commensurate with its historical significance (Haug & Roychoudhury, [2023](#)). This heightened national pride has propelled India to actively seek greater recognition, influence, and leadership in global forums and initiatives. With an eye toward securing permanent seats in international bodies such as the United Nations Security Council, India has demonstrated a keen ambition to project its authority and contribute to shaping the global agenda. However, the simultaneous pursuit of a predominantly Hindu nationalist narrative can raise concerns among other nations that this

assertiveness may be driven by exclusivist tendencies rather than a commitment to fostering international harmony. This delicate balance between nationalistic pride and diplomatic finesse presents both opportunities and challenges for India's foreign policy architects.

The ascent of Hindutva ideology in shaping India's foreign policy landscape has introduced a set of challenges and contradictions that warrant careful consideration. While proponents argue that Hindutva strengthens national unity by fostering a shared cultural identity, critics contend that it risks marginalizing religious and ethnic minorities within India, undermining the pluralistic ethos on which the nation was founded. The dichotomy between projecting a diverse and inclusive image domestically while embracing a predominantly Hindu nationalist narrative in foreign policy decisions can give rise to diplomatic complexities. Striking a balance between preserving the secular tenets of the Indian Constitution and accommodating the aspirations of a particular ideological base poses a continual conundrum (Singh, [2005](#)). Furthermore, the interplay of Hindutva ideology with strategic interests can inadvertently lead to misperceptions and tensions with countries that view India's policies through the lens of exclusivity, casting a shadow on India's reputation as a responsible and inclusive global actor. Navigating these challenges requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges the diverse mosaic of Indian society and the complexities of international relations, ensuring that policy decisions are reflective of both national identity and global responsibilities. The evolution of Hindutva ideology and its entwined relationship with strategic thinking in Indian society has redefined the contours of the nation's foreign policy. The resurgence of Hindu identity as a cornerstone of India's self-perception and its projection on the global stage has engendered both admiration and apprehension.

Modi Government's Policies towards Muslims (2014 to 2019)

During Narendra Modi's tenure as the Prime Minister of India from 2014 to 2019, his government's policies and approach towards the Muslim population became a subject of considerable scrutiny and debate. Modi's rise to power was marked by a combination of optimism and skepticism, given his past as the Chief Minister of Gujarat during the 2002 riots, which led to allegations of bias against religious minorities. As the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), his government aimed to emphasize development, economic growth, and national unity. However, his policies concerning Muslims raised concerns among various segments of society, both within India and on an international scale.

Modi's government introduced several policies during its tenure that were perceived by critics as having a disproportionate impact on the Muslim community. Initiatives like the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) sparked controversy due to fears of discrimination and exclusion of Muslim citizens. Critics argued that these policies potentially marginalized Muslims and conflicted with India's secular principles enshrined in its constitution.

The electoral triumph of 2014 propelled Narendra Modi to the highest echelons of power, riding on a wave of public support that drew from a combination of development promises and the ideological tenets of Hindutva. This fusion of political agenda, cultural nationalism, and religious fervor raised pivotal questions about the relationship between secularism and Hindutva within the contours of India's foreign policy. The convergence of a decisive electoral mandate with the subtle undercurrents of a Hindu nationalist narrative challenged traditional notions of governance and shaped the subsequent foreign policy landscape.

The period from 2014 to 2019 witnessed the introduction of policies and actions that gave rise to debates surrounding the growing influence of Hindu nationalism in Indian governance. Foremost among these was the implementation of beef bans across several states, ostensibly to safeguard the sacred status of cows in Hinduism (Rath, [2015](#)). While framed as measures to uphold cultural and religious sentiments, these bans led to widespread concerns about religious intolerance and the marginalized communities disproportionately affected by such policies. These controversies illuminated a deeper struggle between the ideals of secularism and the ascendancy of Hindutva, raising questions about the government's commitment to safeguarding the rights and religious freedoms of all citizens. As these policies unfolded, they mirrored the larger narrative of an evolving Indian political landscape, where the complex interplay between religious identity and governance choices posed critical challenges to the nation's pluralistic ethos and its international standing.

During the tenure of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister from 2014 to 2019, a distinct strand of nationalism infused India's approach to international relations. Under the umbrella of the "Neighborhood First" policy, the government aimed to bolster regional ties and assert India's prominence on the global stage (Aryal & Bharti, [2023](#)). This assertion, however, often veered towards the realm of nationalistic fervor, particularly in dealings with Pakistan. Instances such as the

2015 cancellation of Foreign Secretary-level talks and the 2016 "surgical strikes" following a cross-border attack underscored the entanglement of foreign policy decisions with domestic political considerations and patriotic sentiment (Kumar, 2017). This approach sparked both admiration and apprehension, exemplifying the intricate dance between nationalist aspirations, strategic interests, and the imperative to maintain diplomatic equilibrium in a rapidly evolving global order.

The period from 2014 to 2019 witnessed the emergence of a new dimension in India's foreign policy: digital diplomacy amplified by a dynamic engagement with its diaspora. Prime Minister Narendra Modi adeptly harnessed the power of social media to connect with millions, projecting an image of a leader in touch with his roots and resonating with the aspirations of the Hindu majority. These interactions not only facilitated direct communication with citizens but also extended to the Indian diaspora, often emphasizing cultural and religious events that fostered a sense of unity among Hindus worldwide. While enhancing India's soft power, this approach also spotlighted the diaspora's role as cultural ambassadors, while simultaneously prompting discussions about the government's alignment with particular cultural and religious identities. This interplay between digital diplomacy and diaspora engagement added a new layer to India's global outreach, intertwining the ideological with the diplomatic in ways that challenged conventional norms of international relations.

The tenure of Narendra Modi from 2014 to 2019 saw a delicate interplay between economic diplomacy and the contours of identity politics. While the government energetically pursued economic partnerships through initiatives like "Make in India" and "Digital India," it was not immune to the currents of identity politics (Kishnani, 2020). The emphasis on India's potential as a global economic powerhouse occasionally overshadowed concerns about the preservation of secular values. The juxtaposition of economic engagement with the simultaneous projection of cultural and religious identity sparked debates about the compatibility of these pursuits. Striving to reap the dividends of global trade and investment while simultaneously navigating the complexities of identity politics, the Modi government faced the challenge of striking a nuanced equilibrium between economic ambitions and the safeguarding of India's pluralistic ethos, thus shaping a distinctive facet of its foreign policy during this period.

The period from 2014 to 2019 witnessed a confluence of Hindutva ideology and foreign policy decisions under the leadership of Narendra Modi. While these

actions were hailed by some as a resolute embrace of India's cultural identity and assertive national stance, they also sparked concerns about the erosion of secular principles that had been foundational to the nation's democratic fabric.

Modi Government's 2019-onwards Agenda

Starting in 2019, the Modi government continued to pursue a range of policies that had significant implications for India's socio-political landscape. One of the most notable initiatives was the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, which revoked the region's special autonomous status. This move was met with mixed reactions, lauded by some as a step towards integration and criticized by others for its potential impact on the region's demographics and autonomy. Furthermore, the government launched the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign) with renewed vigor, focusing on sanitation and cleanliness. The "Make in India" initiative aimed to boost domestic manufacturing and attract foreign investment. The Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) scheme was expanded, providing direct income support to farmers.

One of the most contentious policy moves during Modi's second term was the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed in December 2019. The CAA provides a path to citizenship for religious minorities from neighboring countries, including Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians, who fled persecution and entered India before 2015. Critics argue that this selectively excludes Muslims, raising concerns about the government's intentions and principles of secularism. The CAA's association with the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) further intensifies these concerns. The NRC, designed to identify illegal immigrants, has been executed in the northeastern state of Assam, resulting in the exclusion of many Muslims from the citizenship list. The fear of a nationwide NRC has led to protests and apprehensions among Muslims, who perceive it as an attempt to target their community.

Another significant policy move was the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019, which granted special autonomy to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The decision led to the bifurcation of the state into two union territories – Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. While the government argued that this move would lead to greater integration and development, it faced criticism for being implemented without the consent of the local population and exacerbating tensions in the region. The communication blackout and security clampdown that accompanied the abrogation disproportionately affected the Muslim-majority region, leading to concerns about human rights violations and religious discrimination. The

government justified this move by asserting that it would lead to greater integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India, fostering economic development, and improving security conditions. They argued that the special status had hindered the region's growth by limiting private investment, preventing the extension of key central laws, and fostering separatism. The bifurcation into union territories was presented as a means to provide more focused governance and development administration.

Incidents of vigilantism and violence related to cow protection have also raised concerns about religious tensions during Modi's tenure. Cow slaughter is a sensitive issue in India, and reports of violence against Muslims accused of cow slaughter have surged. Critics argue that the government's response to these incidents has been inadequate, potentially emboldening extremist elements and creating a climate of fear among Muslim communities. In 2019, the government passed a law criminalizing the practice of instant triple talaq (divorce) among Muslims. While proponents argue that the law empowers Muslim women by providing them legal protection against discriminatory practice, opponents contend that it encroaches on religious matters and could lead to the harassment and imprisonment of Muslim men.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 highlighted the vulnerability of marginalized communities, including Muslims. Reports emerged of Muslim neighborhoods being stigmatized due to misconceptions about the virus's spread. Moreover, the nationwide lockdown disproportionately affected daily wage laborers, many of whom belong to minority communities. The subsequent exodus of migrant workers further highlighted socioeconomic disparities. Education and socioeconomic inequalities have been areas of both promise and concern under Narendra Modi's government since 2019. While initiatives like Skill India aim to enhance employability and economic prospects, ensuring equitable access to these opportunities remains a challenge, especially for marginalized communities, including Muslims. Additionally, debates about curricular changes in educational institutions have sparked discussions about the potential marginalization of contributions from Muslim figures in Indian history, raising questions about representation and inclusivity within the educational framework. As India strives for holistic development, addressing these disparities in education and socioeconomic status is crucial for fostering a more equitable and united society.

The policies of Narendra Modi's government since 2019 have generated significant debate and have had varied effects on Muslim communities in India.

While some policies, such as the ban on triple talaq and emphasis on development, have been viewed as steps towards gender equality and economic progress, others, like the CAA and NRC, have sparked concerns about discrimination and exclusion. It is crucial to recognize that the impact of these policies is complex and multifaceted, and perspectives on them vary widely across Indian society. The government's intentions, as well as the socio-political context in which these policies were implemented, play a crucial role in shaping their outcomes. As the nation strives for unity and progress, it is essential to engage in constructive dialogue that considers diverse viewpoints and aims to address the concerns of all citizens, regardless of their religious background.

Hindutva's Influence on Indo-Pak Relations

The implementation of Hindutva policies within India has often exerted significant influence on the country's relations with Pakistan. These policies, which emphasize a Hindu nationalist identity, have at times exacerbated historical tensions and contributed to a strained bilateral relationship between the two nations. Hindutva-related actions, such as the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, have triggered strong reactions from Pakistan, heightening regional instability and increasing the potential for cross-border conflicts. The perception that these policies marginalize religious minorities within India, particularly Muslims, further complicates diplomatic efforts and can be exploited by elements in Pakistan to garner support and push anti-India narratives. While not the sole determinant of the complex Indo-Pak relationship, the impact of Hindutva policies underscores the need for cautious diplomacy and proactive efforts to address historical grievances and foster peaceful coexistence in the region.

Narendra Modi's foreign policy approach has been an intriguing blend of pragmatism, symbolism, and an underlying thread of Hindutva ideology. Throughout his tenure, Modi's emphasis on India's cultural and historical connections with neighboring nations has been palpable, aligning with the core tenets of Hindutva. The "Neighborhood First" and "Act East" policies exemplify this approach, leveraging shared historical legacies to forge diplomatic relationships (Pal, [2016](#)). As the following chapters delve deeper, they illuminate how Modi's visits to sites of Hindu significance during international engagements symbolize the convergence of foreign policy strategy and Hindutva's emphasis on projecting India's cultural heritage globally.

Within the intricate tapestry of India-Pakistan relations, the undercurrents of Hindutva ideology have carved a distinctive path. The Hindutva factor has infused a layer of complexity into the diplomatic interplay between these two neighboring nations. It has influenced crisis responses and diplomatic engagements, and at times, escalated tensions. The historical and cultural connections Hindutva seeks to underscore have implications that ripple across the region's history, aspirations, and security dynamics. As this chapter illuminates the interactions and outcomes stemming from this ideological interplay, it lays bare the challenges and opportunities that arise when an ideology shapes the contours of foreign policy in a region of profound historical significance.

The revocation of Article 370 by the Modi government marked a pivotal juncture in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. This move, emblematic of the Hindutva discourse, has had far-reaching consequences not only for the region but also for the broader Indo-Pak relations. The analysis unravels the complex interplay between ideology and policy, shedding light on how the narrative of Hindutva was employed to justify the revocation as a means to integrate the region more seamlessly into the Indian nation-state. The aftermath of this decision has underscored the intricate challenges of managing regional stability, diplomatic negotiations, and the myriad aspirations of the people of Kashmir. It invites contemplation on the broader implications of reconciling ideological imperatives with the pragmatic necessities of maintaining peaceful relations in a region historically characterized by volatility.

The fusion of Hindutva ideology with India's foreign policy, particularly within the context of Indo-Pak relations, has yielded significant impacts and formidable challenges. The assertive stance influenced by Hindutva has sometimes escalated tensions, impacting regional stability and influencing diplomatic relations with neighboring countries. While the ideology resonates with a segment of the domestic populace, it also engenders polarization and potential social unrest (Ramachandran, [2020](#)). The interplay between ideology and pragmatism presents challenges in maintaining a delicate balance between nationalistic fervor and diplomatic engagement. Striking this equilibrium is crucial for navigating international perceptions and safeguarding India's global image (Vaishnav, [2019](#)). Amidst these complexities, the interweaving of Hindutva into foreign policy raises questions about the future trajectory of Indo-Pak relations and India's broader role on the international stage.

The embrace of Hindutva ideology within the framework of India's foreign policy under the Modi government had implications that extended beyond domestic borders. As India's assertive nationalist narrative gained prominence, neighboring countries and global powers closely scrutinized the shifting dynamics of the South Asian subcontinent. For Pakistan, India's more strident posture fueled apprehensions about potential escalations in already strained relations, forcing Islamabad to recalibrate its own strategies (Cohen, [2004](#)). In the broader region, countries such as China and the United States watched with keen interest as India's domestic ideology found expression in its external interactions. The assertive rhetoric resonated with some nations, viewing India's approach as aligning with their own interests, while for others, it raised questions about India's commitment to regional stability and its role in shaping the global order (Pant & Super, [2015](#)). The global perception of India's Hindutva-infused foreign policy lent new layers of complexity to the already intricate regional dynamics, setting the stage for a recalibration of alliances, strategies, and expectations.

While the infusion of Hindutva ideology into India's foreign policy narrative found resonance among certain segments of the population, it also invited criticism both within the country and on the international stage. Domestically, skeptics raised concerns that the prioritization of assertive nationalism could lead to an escalation of tensions with Pakistan, diverting attention and resources from pressing domestic issues. Critics also argued that the hardline rhetoric might undermine the prospects of meaningful dialogue and peaceful resolutions to long-standing conflicts. Internationally, India's pursuit of a more muscular foreign policy fueled debates about its aspirations as a responsible global power. Some quarters questioned whether India's embrace of Hindutva values might compromise its commitment to regional stability and the principles of peaceful coexistence (Malji, [2018](#)). These criticisms underscored the delicate balancing act that the Modi government had to perform, navigating between catering to domestic sentiments and upholding international obligations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the intricate interplay between secularism and Hindutva in India's foreign policy presents both challenges and opportunities. The paradox encapsulates the nation's struggle to balance its historical commitment to religious pluralism and inclusivity with the rising prominence of Hindutva ideologies, which assert a more assertive Hindu identity. This internal tension

reverberates in India's interactions with the global community, shaping its diplomatic stance and international engagements.

The challenge lies in maintaining India's reputation as a secular and diverse democracy, a key factor that has often contributed to its soft power and international appeal. Straying too far from this secular ethos in foreign relations could potentially undermine the nation's credibility on the global stage and hinder its ability to foster partnerships based on shared values.

Conversely, the paradox also offers opportunities for India to showcase its ability to navigate complexities and uphold democratic principles in the face of ideological challenges. It calls for a delicate balancing act, where the government must recognize the diversity of its citizens while acknowledging the resonance of Hindutva sentiments.

In navigating this paradox, India's foreign policy can be a vehicle for dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among nations with differing worldviews. It necessitates a nuanced approach that embraces the nation's pluralistic heritage while accommodating evolving domestic dynamics. By harnessing its diplomatic finesse, India has the potential to demonstrate that diversity need not be a hurdle but rather an asset in fostering constructive international relations that transcend ideological differences.

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Dr. Naheed Shabbir Goraya
Professor & Director,
Centre for South Asian Studies,
University of the Punjab- Lahore
& Rotary Peace Fellow.

The book "Secularism vs Hindutva: A Disparity between Theory and Practice in Indian Foreign Policy" offers an interesting analysis of the ideological forces that influence India's foreign relations. With a strong emphasis on current developments, it provides a detailed exploration of the complexities and contradictions that characterize India's pursuit of International interests. The Editor's dedication to promoting thoughtful discussion is ostensible throughout, as prominent scholars contribute valuable insights into the Hindu ideology. Each chapter of the book, ranging from analysis of Modi's government policies to their effects on Indo-Pak relations, presents the true understanding of Indian foreign policy evolution. Thoroughly researched and engaging, this book is essential reading for scholars, policy-makers and all those who are interested in the evolving documents to ideology and diplomacy in modern India.

Dr. Muhammad Tehsin,
Tenured Associate Professor,
Department of Defense & Strategic Studies,
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

"Secularism vs Hindutva: A Disparity between Theory and Practice in Indian Foreign Policy" masterfully delves into the ideological dichotomies that define modern India's diplomatic strategies. Through an in-depth examination of historical and contemporary political landscapes, the book scrutinizes the growing tension between the nation's constitutional secularism and the burgeoning influence of Hindutva in shaping foreign policy. The editor's intellectual rigor is evident, with each chapter offering a meticulously crafted analysis, underscoring the implications of this ideological conflict on regional and global diplomacy. By exploring themes like the influence of Hindutva on India's engagement with neighboring nations and the world, this book presents a critical resource for understanding the broader context of India's foreign relations. Rich in scholarship, coherent in narrative, and deeply informative, this volume is an invaluable contribution to academic discourse on India's evolving international role.

DR. AFTAB ALAM
Research Fellow,
Department of Political Science,
Ludwig Maximilian University Munich, Germany.

Secularism vs Hindutva is a captivating and deeply insightful analysis of the complex interplay between secularism and the growing influence of Hindutva in India's foreign policy. The author skillfully navigates the historical roots of both ideologies, linking them to contemporary political developments that shape India's interactions on the global stage. The book provides a comprehensive examination of how Hindutva's rise has redefined India's domestic policies and diplomatic strategies, particularly its relationships with neighboring countries like Pakistan. What stands out is the balanced and nuanced perspective, where the author does not shy away from discussing the challenges of maintaining India's secular ethos while contending with Hindutva's ideological pull. This scholarly work offers a fresh lens for understanding the internal and external forces that drive India's political landscape today. It's a must-read for students, academics, and policymakers interested in South Asian politics and the profound implications of ideolocal shifts on international relations.

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