

**AI** AYAAN  
INSTITUTE

# UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL HINDUTVA

A black silhouette of a person standing on a rounded hill, holding a pickaxe high above their head. To the left of the person, a thin vertical spike or pole is planted in the ground. The entire scene is set against a solid orange background.

**ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT,  
CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

# UNDERSTANDING GLOBAL HINDUTVA:

ORIGIN, DEVELOPMENT,  
CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS



UNITY | INDEPENDENCE | PROSPERITY | STRENGTH

The Ayaan Institute is an independent think tank  
Based in London, UK.

Our vision is to see a Muslim world that is united, Independent, strong, prosperous, free of wars and Conflict, and capable of resolving its own issues. Our mission is to stimulate thinking among Muslims To develop and formulate new and creative ideas, And policy proposals for solving the complex Problems facing Muslims and their states Globally.

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# FOREWORD

Our report on global Hindutva constitutes the first of its kind to provide a comparative overview of Hindutva ideology and institutions and their spread, impact, and potential threat at a global level, with a survey of eight countries and one region outside India where it is significant (Bangladesh, Canada, the Gulf States of the Middle East, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, and the United States).

This report takes up three elements of the Ayaan Institute's founding 12-point manifesto for the renewal of Islamic civilization: (i) tackled the growth of racist and nationalist supremacist ideas that impact Muslim minority communities (Point 10); (ii) developing a framework of thinking beyond nationalist borders, proposing global solutions to global challenges (Point 8); and (iii) developing a holistic vision of global justice predicated on universal Islamic principles and ethics (Point 12).<sup>1</sup> It also follows directly from the Ayaan Institute's primary conceptual and analytical mapping report on Muslim minorities, which forms a key strand of its work. That report identified the discriminatory and violent treatment of India's Muslims, the largest Muslim minority in the world; and stated that India "sets the global agenda for the state treatment of Muslim minorities everywhere" and that "Hindutva is emerging as the chief driver of global Islamophobia."<sup>2</sup>

The growth of the ideology of Hindutva or Hindu supremacist nationalism in India over the last three decades poses a grave threat to the largest minority of Muslims in the world, but its global impact is less well understood. This growing threat is naturally of great concern to Muslim minority communities living and working around the world who are of South Asian origin and have family and other ties to India. This is particularly the case in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom among others.

Hindutva is now responsible for the greatest growth in global anti-Muslim, anti-Islam prejudice and hate, particularly on social media and in Indian news media. Hindutva and Indian trolls portray Muslims and Islam as a threat in every country and play into far-right hate narratives and conspiracy theories about Muslims. This makes Muslims more vulnerable to far-right attacks too. Therefore, the current spread of Hindutva among Hindu communities in different parts of the world poses a direct threat to Muslim minority communities around the world and to good community relations, even where Hindus and Muslims have had good community relations for decades in places like Britain.

Muslim minority communities have no option but to try to stem the growth of global Hindutva. This task cannot be left to politicians alone to deal with. The civil society institutions of Muslim communities using politics outside the political system must be prepared to build networks and campaigns to take on this important challenge.

Yet, as this report details, this is far from being an exclusively Indian Muslim issue or even just a Muslim one. While Hindutva's main target is Indian Muslims, the fact is that Sikhs, Christians, Dalits, and any Hindus who oppose the project of an exclusivist Hindu nation are also targeted as Hindutva's Others. As this report shows, this is equally true outside of India.

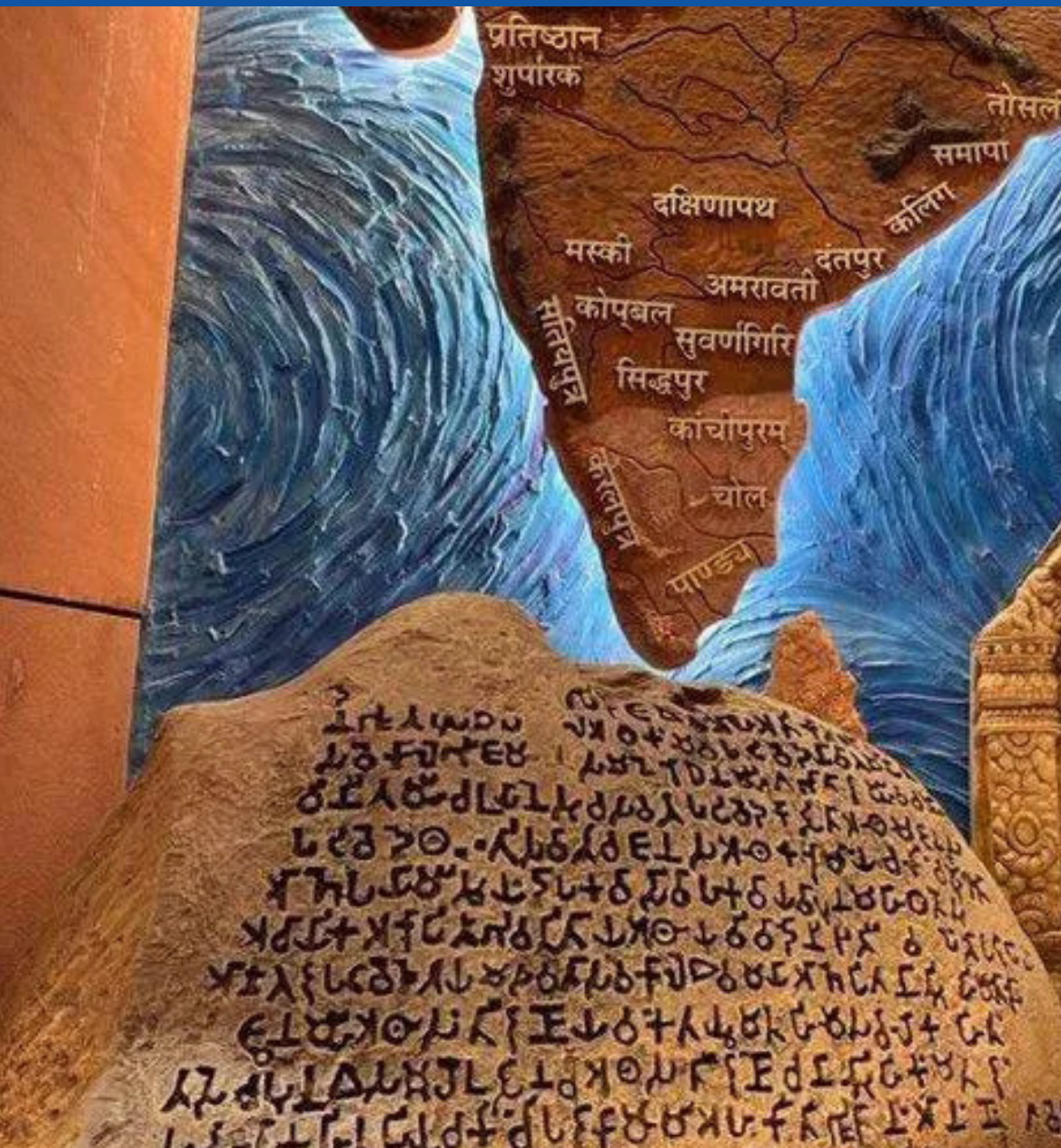
Hateful, supremacist ideologies emanating from one part of the world now spread and radicalise quickly in today's digital world, especially if they are state-coordinated and led, as is the case with Modi's India, yet, at its roots, global Hindutva has been spread through community organising and institutional capture in parts of the Hindu diaspora for decades. Thus taking on global Hindutva is not only an ideological but an institutional challenge too.

Unchecked and unchallenged in the West and the Gulf States, global Hindutva causes significant harm to inter-communal relations, while in South Asia, it is already stoking intolerant nationalisms in the entire region, with serious consequences for minorities there, including minority Hindu populations. Thus, this report also provides an essential primer on the nature of Hindutva in India and globally, its ideology, its institutions, its historical development over a century, its tactics and its strategies, knowledge and awareness of which is essential as a precursor to challenging it and retarding its growth. In addition, the report gives an analysis of the growing anti-Hindutva movement in India and the United States, highlighting best practices and providing key recommendations on how to strengthen this movement further.

We hope this our first report on global Hindutva will help educate and galvanise Muslim and non-Muslim communities to address the threat head-on.

**Ayaan Institute**  
**February 2024**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



“Akhand Bharat” (Ancient or Unified Greater India) unveiled at the new Indian Parliament in 2023. It includes parts of Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. Its unveiling caused a diplomatic spat with Pakistan and Nepal/Twitter @JoshiPralhad



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 0. INTRODUCTION

This report examines the emergence and expansion of Global Hindutva, a transnational ideological movement that seeks to widen support for a supremacist Hindu nation beyond India's borders. While rooted in India's domestic politics, global Hindutva has gained momentum and influence in various regions, including South Asia, Indonesia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America. Its growth reflects India's rising status as a nuclear power with the world's fifth-largest economy and the world's biggest population. After providing a primer on the origins and development of Hindutva within India from the 1920s to the present day, this report highlights key developments and consequences of this major emerging trend in world affairs by examining nine countries where global Hindutva operates outside India.

This report on Global Hindutva takes up three elements of the Ayaan Institute's founding 12-point manifesto for the renewal of Islamic civilization – the development of a principled and empirically-based critique of nationalist supremacism, either religious or secular, that targets Muslims and other minorities (Point 10), within an analytical framework of thinking beyond national borders proposing global solutions to global challenges (Point 8), within a holistic vision of global justice predicated on universal Islamic principles (Point 12). In particular, this report flows directly from the Ayaan Institute's primary conceptual and analytical mapping report on Muslim minorities, which forms a key strand of its work, that identified the discriminatory and violent treatment of India's Muslims, the largest Muslim minority in the world, "sets the global agenda for the state treatment of Muslim minorities everywhere" and that "Hindutva is emerging as the chief driver of global Islamophobia".

## 0.1. GLOBAL REACH AND GOALS OF HINDUTVA

Global Hindutva organisations and affiliates, linked to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its affiliates, and India's ruling party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have actively propagated Hindutva ideology abroad since the 1960s. Their activities span political, financial, cultural, and religious domains, with a focus on mobilising the Indian diaspora to promote its agenda with foreign governments in a highly strategic manner. Its goals are (a) to radicalize key Hindu diasporic populations outside India with its ideology, (b) to target and demonise Muslim populations, especially those critical of global Hindutva, (c) to limit or prevent Western criticisms of Hindutva policies against Muslims or other minorities, chiefly through propaganda and alliance building, and (d) to vigorously promote Islamophobia in general, not just as it relates to India, through global social media platforms.

## 0.2. EURO-AMERICA

The UK hosts a substantial Indian diaspora and has become a key target for global Hindutva's ideological propagation and even some aggressive street marches. Hindutva organizations have gained influence within both main political parties, impacting local politics and straining intercommunity relations.

In North America, the United States and Canada have sizeable Indian communities, where considerable efforts by Hindutva-affiliated groups have made inroads into politics and public discourse on matters of caste discrimination, school curricula on Hinduism and Indian history, and overall positive support for India and the BJP-led government.



### 0.3. MIDDLE EAST

In the Middle East, the Gulf States have significant Indian expatriate populations, part of which have been influenced by global Hindutva. Yet rising economic ties between India and these states, coupled with a shared agenda to tackle Islamic political activism, have neutered their response to Hindutva's domestic actions and influence among Indian workers in the Gulf.

### 0.4. SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

In South Asia, global Hindutva has provoked tensions with neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Hindutva-affiliated groups have sought to exert their influence in limited and circumscribed ways, often leading to inter-communal conflicts, while geopolitical relations between these nations have created a dynamic of competitive religious or secular ethnic nationalisms. Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, has been an exception in avoiding the competitive nationalisms of South Asia, promoting a moderate cosmopolitan form of Islam that has been seized upon by Hindutva advocates to accuse India's Muslims of extremism.

### 0.5. BUILDING AN ANTI-HINDUTVA COALITION

The report also discusses efforts to build an anti-Hindutva coalition within the Indian diaspora. It outlines strategies, including intersectional awareness, joint solidarity statements, support for social justice movements, educational outreach, broadening scope, and involvement of progressive non-South Asian organizations. These initiatives aim to counter the influence of Hindutva ideology and promote a more inclusive and diverse narrative.

Within India, drawing on lessons from the Shaheen Bagh protests, the report underscores the importance of spontaneous political action, the role of women and youth leaders, the erasure of hierarchies, and the call for interfaith unity. These protests served as a powerful critique of ethnic nationalism and corporatised democracy, offering an alternative narrative that challenges divisive ideologies.

### 0.6. STRATEGIC RESPONSE TO GLOBAL HINDUTVA

Global Hindutva's expansion beyond India's borders has far-reaching implications, affecting geopolitics, intercommunity relations, and diaspora politics in South Asia, the Middle East, and Euro-America. The emergence of anti-Hindutva coalitions and the lessons from grassroots movements highlight the resilience of those advocating for a more inclusive and diverse vision for India and its diaspora communities, but they are only a beginning and are not yet strong enough to turn back the tide of intolerance, discrimination and persecution. As Global Hindutva continues to evolve, its impact on global politics and society should no longer be downplayed or ignored by other countries in favour of courting India as a rising economic and political power, and the strategic goal must be to put an anti-Hindutva agenda higher up the global agenda.

## 0.7. FIVE KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

### 0.7.1. STRENGTHEN GLOBAL PUBLIC EDUCATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF HINDUTVA

Educate individuals, governments, and agencies globally about the nature and threat of Hindutva ideology, particularly its potential to radicalize Hindu communities against Islam and Muslims. Focus on informing law enforcement and community relations bodies about the radicalizing activities of Hindutva-linked institutions outside India.

### 0.7.2. STRENGTHEN THE COUNTER-NARRATIVE TO HINDUTVA PROPAGANDA

Organize efforts to counter Hindutva propaganda disseminated through various mediums such as social media, Bollywood, and online news outlets. Challenge and contest Hindutva's revisionist narratives, including those regarding historic mosques and Sufi shrines.

### 0.7.3. MUSLIM STATES INTERVENTION ON HINDUTVA

Muslim-majority states, especially those employing large numbers of Indian expatriate workers, should curb Hindutva ideology within their borders and act against individuals promoting hate against Muslims and other minorities. Utilize state media and independent media to counter Hindutva narratives and educate the public.

### 0.7.4. RAMP-UP MONITORING AND REPORTING ON HINDUTVA

Prioritize countering the spread of Hindutva ideology by developing and strengthening the capacity to monitor, report, and maintain records of Hindutva-linked violence, hate crimes, and genocidal rhetoric. Encourage collaboration with international human rights organizations and UN agencies to monitor and report on Hindutva activities.

### 0.7.5. STRENGTHENING MULTILATERAL COOPERATION

Foster international cooperation among civil society organizations, academia, and governments to monitor and counter the global spread of Hindutva ideology. Establish a coordinated effort to share information, best practices, and strategies to address the challenge collectively.



# 1. WHAT IS GLOBAL HINDUTVA?



Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh members marching with its official Bhagwa Dhwaj (saffron flag). Established in 1925, the RSS is the mothership of the Hindutva family of organisations, which includes its political wing, the BJP/Wikimedia Commons



# 1.0. WHAT IS GLOBAL HINDUTVA?

## 1.1. A DEFINITION OF GLOBAL HINDUTVA

The Hindutva Harassment Field Manual, compiled by academic experts on the movement, provides a succinct definition that takes in its global aspect, which is the focus of this report:

Hindutva (literally 'Hindu-ness') is a modern political ideology that advocates for Hindu supremacy and seeks to transform India, constitutionally a secular state, into an ethno-religious nation known as the Hindu Rashtra (Hindu nation). Hindutva is the official platform of the BJP, an extreme-right political party in India. Parts of the Indian diaspora ... also champion Hindutva. [...] Hindutva ideology is promoted by an array of vigilante, political, and cultural groups, known collectively as the Sangh Parivar. The RSS, a paramilitary organization based in India, is at the centre of the Sangh and sets the priorities and tactics for promoting Hindutva ideology. The RSS's overseas branch, the HSS, actively operates to promote Hindu nationalist ideas and goals among the Indian diaspora.... Hindutva ideology dates back, roughly, 100 years.<sup>3</sup>

## 1.2. HINDUTVA IS ONLY ONE STRAND OF HINDU NATIONALISM

As a matter of historical fact, Hindutva is a part of Hindu nationalism, which itself developed in the late nineteenth century under the British Raj, out of which Hindutva emerged in the early twentieth century, but, even so, Hindutva is not synonymous with Hindu nationalism, and this report will not use the two as synonyms as is the case in a lot of the academic literature on Hindutva. This is because Hindu nationalism has and has had a broad spectrum that includes

secular and religious elements, as well as left-wing, liberal and right-wing dimensions. For instance, other important movements in the nineteenth century included the distinctive Arya Samaj and Hindu Sangathan movements.

## 1.3. HINDUTVA'S INDEBTEDNESS TO EUROPEAN COLONIALISM AND FASCISM

As a modern political ideology, the European fascisms of Italy and Germany influenced the origins and early development of Hindutva, as is well documented, both ideologically and organizationally. However, as true as that may be, it was also profoundly shaped by the context of British colonial rule, for instance, the idea of Akhand Bharat (Greater India), first articulated in the 1930s, essentially described the boundaries of British India, which would incorporate modern-day Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Tibet as a greater Hindu nation.

Hindutva is also inescapably part of European colonial reconstructions of multifarious religious traditions as distinct world religions shaped by Christian ideas of religions as defined by orthodox beliefs, bounded religious identities and an authorised scriptural tradition.<sup>4</sup> This was tied to the British project to define, divide and rule imperial subjects by separating them by religion, ethnicity and caste. Indians were not merely subjects of this process but helped to co-create, in the face of the colonial critique, the construction of Hinduism as an idea and an identity.<sup>5</sup> While there are clearer analogues of this colonial Christian formulation of "religion" in the other Abrahamic faiths, a great deal

more reconstruction in the British imperial and Orientalist imagination was needed for the non-Abrahamic faiths such as Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Sikhism, and Hinduism. In the case of Hinduism, this is particularly stark. As Gavin Flood points out, Hinduism thus conceived has no single historical founder, nor a unified single creed or soteriology, nor a centralized authority or bureaucratic structure.<sup>6</sup> In many respects then, Hindutva is an ideological political project designed to flatten the sheer heterogeneity of Indian religious traditions into something like the structure of a discrete world religion that the British wished to rule over and define.

## 1.4. HINDUTVA AS A REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

Hindutva should be understood as a revolutionary movement with the ambition and increasingly the means to reshape India and Hinduism as a whole. While it has not had a discrete revolutionary moment, it should be described as aspirant towards becoming a “total institution”.<sup>7</sup> This means that Hindutva aims to become synonymous with all aspects of life, be they psychological, social, religious, legal, economic or political, and aims to remake the individual and society in its image. And, as an extension of that ambition, it also seeks to bend the world into compliance with its India-first worldview. It regards the Hindu diaspora as the central asset in that ambition. At the same time, as will be detailed below, while the BJP has achieved power through the ballot box, it also wants to remake India as a Hindu nation and this has involved the capture of public institutions and civil society, hollowing out the country’s democratic institutions and civil society in the process.

## 1.5. HINDUTVA IS NOT EQUIVALENT TO HINDUISM

This point cannot be stated enough times. It is deeply offensive but also politically foolish to conflate all Hindus with Hindutva ideology. It is a fact that many Hindus deeply oppose Hindutva and what it represents. Trading on cheap or faux-sophisticated anti-Hindu sentiment is not only morally wrong but also politically self-defeating. It will become clear in the course of this report, that Indian Muslims and other Indian minorities both in India and the diaspora will not be able to reverse the forward march of Hindutva without Hindus themselves.

## 1.6. HINDUTVA IS NOT THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR ON TERROR

Given the struggles of the last twenty years, it is both a strategic and tactical blunder for Muslim activists or their allies to wrap the rise of Hindutva in India and globally into the Global War on Terror. While it is true that the BJP and its sister organisations have instrumentalized the global Islamophobia industry that grew after 9/11, its roots much predate it and Hindutva will also likely outlive it. While India’s 2003 anti-terrorism legislation has disproportionately targeted Muslims and been used to stifle dissent, the construction of Muslims as foreign outsiders and as a threat to the nation had its roots in British Orientalism with important continuities in post-independence India.<sup>8</sup> Rather, the problem of Hindutva today is located in the globalization of hyper-nationalism, in which Hindutva has become a leading and highly influential proponent.

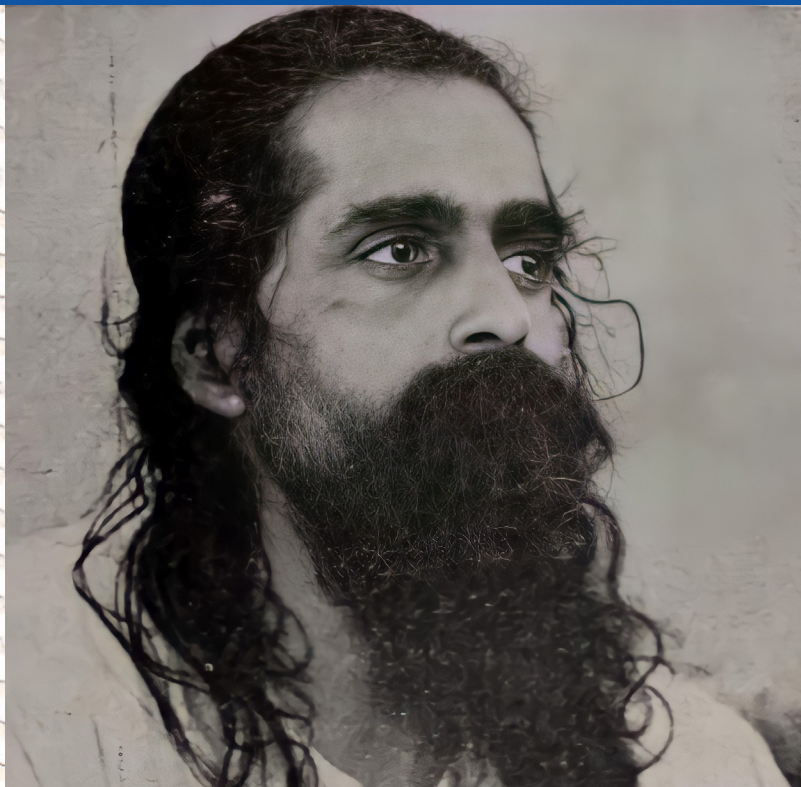
## 1.7. ANTI-HINDUTVA MOVEMENTS MUST AVOID COMPETITIVE NATIONALISM

As was argued in a previous report by the Ayaan Institute, the Ummah as a universal, ethical concept stands in principle against the co-option of religion by ethnocentrism and nationalism, and thus the problem of countering Hindutva in India and globally lies not in competing with it on its terms – the arms race of religious and secular nationalisms – but in coming to terms institutionally with cosmopolitanism and pluralism as a core positive value of civilizational states.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF HINDUTVA TO 2014



V.D. Savarkar (1883-1966), author of *Essentials of Hindutva* (1923), commemorative Indian stamp from 1970/Wikimedia Commons



M.S. Golwalkar (1906-73), leader of the RSS (1940-73), photograph from 1949/Wikimedia Commons



# 2.0. THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF HINDUTVA TO 2014

## 2.1. INDIA'S DEMOCRACY AFTER INDEPENDENCE

One way of looking at India's political development since independence is through the tension between democracy, clientelism and caste politics. These have resulted in three distinct phases between 1947 and the present day.<sup>10</sup>

### 2.1.1. CONSERVATIVE DEMOCRACY (1947-1980s)

After the 1950 Constitution, conservative despite the socialist rhetoric of Nehru and Indira Gandhi. Congress nationalized parts of the economy but politically was reliant on networks of high-caste notables, big businessmen, and large landowners. This clientelism prevented any serious land reform, one of Congress' major stated goals. Positive discrimination was limited to the Scheduled Castes, or the Dalits (the Oppressed, known pejoratively as the Untouchables), but there was none for the non-Dalit lower castes, the Shudra. During Indira Gandhi's authoritarian suspension of democracy in the 1970s, she did redistribute a little more land, but overall her agenda was conservative.

### 2.1.2. DEMOCRATIZATION OF DEMOCRACY (LATE 1970s, LATE 1980s-2000s)

A coalition of opposition parties has twice defeated Congress to form governments, united by the determination to do away with upper caste control (the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas and the Vaishyas, and the dominant castes among the Shudras, both demographically and economically).

In the late 1970s, it was the Janata Party and for two years from 1989, the Janata Dal. In the late 1970s, the Mandal Commission recommended positive discrimination quotas be extended to the impoverished Shudras, but Congress shelved it once they were back in power. However, the Commission's recommendations were implemented in 1990 after the Janata Dal came to power. A reaction from the higher castes led to a major electoral mobilisation by the impoverished Shudras which led to a doubling of representation from the Hindi Belt, India's most weighty political region (a fifth of the 45% of seats in the People's Assembly, the Lok Sabha), even as the Janata Dal coalition fell apart. Now all parties, including Congress, had to court the impoverished Shudra vote, known in the Constitution as OBCs (Other Backward Classes), as they made up over half the population, and could no longer rely on the old clientelism. In turn, this led to lowered turnout in elections in the late 1990s and early 2000s, by upper-caste and middle-class voters.

### 2.1.3. HINDUTVA DEMOCRACY (2014-PRESENT)

Driven by the backlash of the upper-caste groups who came to draw on the Hindutva ideology, until 2014, the BJP was not in a position to govern in its own right. With the rise of populism, the rhetoric focused on promoting a Hindu nation against India's post-independence secular tradition and its minorities has not translated into effective policies for the Hindu poor. These groups have been made subject to vigilante violence. In addition, the state has developed new forms of authoritarianism

according to its majoritarian rationale: hollowing out the state, distorting elections, targeting minorities more officially, and making Muslim second-class citizens in legal terms, this last element in many ways being pioneered in Jammu & Kashmir.

## 2.2. HINDU NATIONALISM

Hindu nationalism arose in response to European and specifically British colonialism in India. In response to the colonial critique of idolatry, superstition, and mistreatment of women and lower castes, Hindu reformers recast the oldest Sanskrit texts as a golden age that supported sober worship and egalitarianism. While Hindus allied with pan-Islam groups in India like the Khilafat movement, there also emerged a reactive sense of “majoritarian inferiority complex” among some Hindus in the 1920s too. This sense of inferiority had developed through the colonial stereotyping of Hindus as “a puny race”. It was also a reaction to inter-caste division and a dramatization of demographic decline that Hindus would eventually be supplanted in India (proportionately, the Hindu population fell from 74.3% in 1881 to 68.2% in 1931).

## 2.3. THE CORE OF FOUNDATIONAL HINDUTVA IDEOLOGY

It was in this context that Hindutva ideology arose and was first articulated with five key elements. Its founding text is V.D.v's *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* (1923), which outlined the first four elements; the fifth element was emphasized by M.S. Golwalkar, more muted in Savakar, in *We, or Our Nationhood Defined* (1939):

**1. Race:** the myth of Aryan ancestry for all Hindus, an idea first championed in the

context of Hindu nationalism by the Arya Samaj in the nineteenth century.

**2. Territory:** A geographic identification with Vedic India as a sacred land.

**3. Language:** Sanskrit as the mother of all languages, an idea that is founded on British and German Orientalist linguistic theories about proto-Indo-European languages that were later racialized to promote Aryans as rational over Semites as religious.<sup>11</sup>

**4. Culture:** Hindu culture as an exclusive metric of belonging, with religion as a secondary factor, as was the case with early Zionism. The focus was on defining a people rather than a religion.

**5. Outcast Groups:** The Hindu people's outcast groups, which had to adopt Hindu culture and language, revere Hinduism and accept their status as second-class citizens. They were defined as Muslims, Christians and the Congress Party for its championing of composite nationalism. At most these outcast groups could practise their faith in private. Golwalkar's model was Nazi Germany's ethnic definition of nationhood.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.4. THE INSTITUTIONAL GROWTH OF HINDUTVA TO 2014

### 2.4.1. FORMATION OF THE RSS (1925)

Institutionally, the mothership of Hindutva is the Rashtriya Swaymanevak Sangh (RSS, National Volunteer Organisation) founded in 1925 in Nagpur, central India, by K.B. Hedgewar and M.S. Golwalkar. It recruited both Hindu youth and adults for physical and ideological training, and, despite its Brahmin roots, it has invariably recruited

widely to overcome caste divisions to create a saffron brotherhood, a calculated adoption of what was seen as Muslim strengths. It expanded rapidly in its first decades, so that, by 1947, it claimed 600,000 branches across India. Out of this army of volunteers, an elite cadre of preachers and organizers was trained to develop the RSS further.

### 2.4.2. FORMATION OF THE VHP (1964)

After independence, among setting up several burgeoning civil society associations, the next milestone was the formation of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP, World Council of Hindus) in 1964. Formed in response to Christian proselytization among Hindus, it endowed Hinduism with something quite novel – its own Church-like structure, gathering as many leaders of Hindu sects as possible into a religious governing body. In 1979, a new charitable arm, the Seva Bharti (Indian Service) was formed, which focused mostly on education as well as health among deprived Hindus, including untouchables. It supplemented the work of another arm, the Sarasvati Shishu Mandir, which from 1950 built up a body of schools with a very ideological curriculum. In the 1980s, a young movement, the Bajrang Dal was formed under the VHP, which looked after security and gave the Hindutva movement a “shock troop” function, which, with the rise of vigilante violence, has grown into one of the largest arms of the RSS.

### 2.4.3. THE SANGH PARIVAR FAMILY

The RSS forms the head of this complex set of institutions, which from the 1950s onwards came to be referred to internally as the Sangh Parivar (the Sangh Family). Despite its complex of wide-ranging institutions with overlapping remits,

its coherence is unwritten by the cadres trained by the RSS who circulate through all of these institutions. The cadres are rotated to stop them from becoming too tied to certain locales or issues. Thus, despite its seeming surface heterogeneity and comprehensiveness, the RSS maintains a well-oiled machinery at the centre, despite the disparateness of the Sangh Parivar’s grassroots mobilisation. Besides the main bodies mentioned so far, other significant Sangh Parivar affiliates include the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (est. 1955, workers trade union, 10m claimed membership), Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (est. 1948, education and student welfare, mostly North India, 2m claimed membership), Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (est. 1978, Indian Farmers Union, 2m claimed membership), Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (est. 28,000 schools among tribal communities), Vidya Bharati (est. 1952, 25,000 religious schools run by the RSS), among 40-odd other affiliated organisations.

The quarter-century dedicated to building up the Sangh Parivar before a formal entry into politics in 1951 (and that too was reactive) reflected, like the European fascisms it drew on, the RSS’s focus under Golwalkar’s leadership on remaking the people. The state was not an end in itself but rather its capture and transformation would further the project of making a complete Hindu nation. It differed from European fascism in putting the movement above charismatic leaders, an ethos achieved through consistent rotation, at least until the rise of Modi.<sup>13</sup>

## 2.5. THE SANGH PARIVAR IN POLITICS TO 2014

### 2.5.1. THE FORMATION OF A POLITICAL WING (1951 AND 1980)

The fallout from the assassination of M.K. Gandhi in 1948 led to the banning of the RSS as his murderer was alleged to have been an active RSS member. This led Golwalkar to establish a separate political party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS, Indian People's Association) in 1951 to contest Congress dominance. However, the BJS never escaped Congress' pincer movement. The first was that it had Hindu conservatives within its rank who stole its thunder on cow protection and the promotion of Hindi, and the second was that the Congress leadership targeted it directly as anti-secularist. Eventually, it moderated its position over time and was absorbed into the Janata Party, which opposed Indira Gandhi's State of Emergency in the 1970s, and promoted a weaker form of Hindu nationalism. The three measures the ex-BJS promoted inside the coalition – a ban on cow slaughter, curbing religious conversions, and revising history textbooks to promote Hinduism – led to them being ousted. Thus, in March 1980, they formed the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party). This led to a change of strategy – the BJP would engage the political mainstream, while the VHP would drive an ideological awakening in Hindu India.

### 2.5.2. THE AYODHYA PROVOCATION

The trigger the VJP chose was to target a historic mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. Since 1949, the false claim has been made that a sixteenth-century mosque, the Babri Masjid, had been built over a Hindu temple

dedicated to Ram. The controversy meant that the mosque was closed, even when it receded into the political background. The VHP revived the claim in the mid-1980s, and the BJP, sensing an electoral advantage, became involved in stoking the claim in 1989 during national elections. This led to the BJP's first breakthrough, jumping from 2 to 85 seats in the Lok Sabha. The BJP subsequently joined the eclectic anti-Congress coalition that made up the Janata Party under V.P. Singh but continued to push the Ayodhya issue. This culminated in the destruction of the mosque by extremists in December 1992: although the BJP denied it, the official inquiry found the party had orchestrated the so-called spontaneous demolition.

It was the demolition of the Babri Masjid that galvanised the RSS as an ideological movement after 1992, especially the Rath Yatra led by A.K. Advani. Recently, he was granted India's highest civilian award in 2024, when, in the run-up to the national elections, Modi inaugurated the new temple at Ayodhya that had been constructed over the ruins of the mosque.

### 2.5.3. THE BJP'S FORCED ELECTORAL MODERATION

By 1996, the BJP became the largest party in the Lok Sabha with 160 seats, but it was unable to form a coalition. Thus, between 1998 and 2014, the party went through a period of forced electoral moderation, in which it could not enact many of its stated policies such as rebuilding a temple at Ayodhya, revoking Jammu & Kashmir's constitutional autonomy, or banning Muslim family law from the civil code. Even when it led a coalition government in 1998, it focused on competent governance rather than on ideology.

In the 1999 elections, it issued a joint manifesto with its coalition partners, leaving aside all contentious issues, and doubled down on this approach after its defeat in 2004. Central to what prevented the BJP from gaining an absolute majority before 2014 was a failure to appeal electorally to the majority of Hindus who belonged to the lower castes, and it remained the political home for Hindu social elites. This forced compromise at the elite political level should not, however, detract from the fact that the rhetoric of the RSS and the violence promulgated towards Indian Muslims between 1990 and 2002 makes a distinction between this period and more recent times redundant at a societal level. The perceived failure to promote Hindutva politically in this period before 2014 re-energised the RSS to push for a stronger mobilization of the Hindu majority, and it chose Narendra Modi as its leader to contest the 2014 elections.

### 2.6.1. THE GUJARAT POGROM OF 2002

The trigger incident was the killing of 58 militant Hindu volunteers (kar sevaks) in two carriages of a train at Godhra Station on 27 February 2002. The causes are unclear, but all serious analysts agree it was local and unplanned. The BJP quickly and falsely blamed the Pakistan intelligence services. What followed the next day was a systematic pogrom orchestrated by the Sangh Parivar family of organisations, the BJP government of Gujarat, the police and senior national civil servants. The RSS called a state-wide closure (bandh) to protest the Godhra killings. The most intense period of killing took place between 28 February–3 March and 15–27 March, but continued into June, in which more than two thousand Muslim men, women and children were killed. Five hundred mosques and Sufi shrines

**BJP SEATS IN INDIA'S GENERAL ELECTIONS (SEATS AND VOTE SHARE)**

1984	1989	1991	1996	1998	1999	2004	2009	2014	2021
2	85	119	160	178	182	138	116	282	303
7.4	11.4	7.4	20.1	25.6	23.8	22.2	18.8	51.7	55.8

## 2.6. THE GUJARAT POGROM AND THE MODI PLAYBOOK

Modi's reign as Gujarat's Chief Minister between 2002–14 saw him break away from BJP's strategy of moderating to hold power in coalition during the 1990s and 2000s towards a confrontational, divisive populism. With hindsight, Gujarat functioned as Modi's laboratory for India writ large after 2014. His tenure began with the deaths of over two thousand Muslims in Gujarat.

Five hundred mosques and Sufi shrines (dargahs) were destroyed, and 150,000 Muslims were displaced by mid-April. There was systematic sexual molestation, rape and murder of Muslim women and children. A leading newspaper, Sandesh, ran the headline, "Avenge Blood with Blood" on 28 February. In the immediate aftermath, the BJP supported its chief minister Modi over its Prime Minister Vajpayee. Modi moved the state elections forward and successfully played on the post-pogrom religious polarization to win half the seats (enlarging the BJP's share over the previous elections).

## 2.6.2. MODITVA: MODI'S REFORMULATION OF HINDUTVA

It was as chief minister of Gujarat that Modi devised and implemented a revised form of Hindutva politics, one that moved away from the BJP's enforced moderation in power through coalition politics in the 1990s and the 2000s towards his distinctive brand of divisive populism, which built on but moved away from the restrictions of his RSS background (his many decades as an RSS organizer at local and national levels). The 2007 and 2012 election results for Gujarat show a slight solidification of religious polarization that had already been established, but more significantly Modi was able to bridge socioeconomic divisions sufficiently to extend its appeal beyond the BJP's upper-class/caste core to eat away at Congress's core support in the middle, lower and poor classes.<sup>14</sup> The distinctive elements in what the press at the time recognised as "Moditva" are as follows, played out first in Gujarat but increasingly across India in the run-up to the 2014 election when Modi ran as the BJP's candidate for prime minister:

- Charismatic strongman figure, central to populism if not to early Hindutva's more corporatist model. He identified himself as a personification of Gujarat herself, above politics, as an everyman of the people from a humble background, as a son of the soil.
- Modi pitted himself against both Delhi and Pakistan while singling out Gujarat's Muslims through a series of trumped-up terrorist cases against innocent Muslims, many of whom were shot dead by the police (termed as "fake encounters") between 2003–6. In opposition nationally from 2004, the Sangh Parivar fomented a greater sense of Hindu vulnerability to a

constructed Muslim threat, which allowed it to recruit angry young men afflicted by mass unemployment to the Bajrang Dal, its vigilante wing, which was used openly as a directed tool of violence and as vote mobilizers nationally.

- Emphasis upon ethnic identity (Gujarati-ness) and to the newly urbanized lower middle classes (what Modi called the "neo-middle class") to appeal across and dilute caste divisions.
- A promise of general economic growth that led in practice to capital-intensive investment with extraordinarily little job creation, the main objective being to gather financial support from investing industrialists in Gujarat. They, alongside others in the business elite, financed the BJP's national election campaign in 2014.
- Caste is diluted in favour of a binary conception of class and pan-Hindu religion defined against the Muslim minority.
- An electoral strategy to "ethnicize" this newly constituted pan-Hindu majority through radicalizing them, which is only workable in a democratic system for a majority, but not for a minority. Although the ground had been laid previously for a Hindu vote bank in the early 1990s with the Ayodhya issue, the BJP did not systematically use polarization to gain overall power until Modi. In addition, the BJP's national victory in 2014 was used as a springboard to push through the same radicalizing strategy in state elections, which resulted in the BJP securing 20 out of 29 federal states over the next four years. The BJP had become the overwhelming dominant party in India, occupying the position that Congress once held.<sup>15</sup>



# 3. HINDUTVA EMPOWERED: MODI'S INDIA SINCE 2014



Prime Minister Modi at the Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple  
in Andhra Pradesh, 27 November 2023/Wikimedia Commons



# 3.0. HINDUTVA EMPOWERED: MODI'S INDIA SINCE 2014

## 3.1. THE ATTACK ON MINORITIES

### 3.1.1. CHRISTIANS

Christians, who make up less than 2% of India's population, have faced various challenges. They are often targeted due to their historical association with British rule and their involvement in missionary activities, particularly in the fields of service, health, and education. Christian schools, especially Jesuit institutions, have been compelled to participate in Hindu ceremonies and chants. Additionally, Christian NGOs have encountered restrictions on receiving foreign funds, although limited relief was granted for one American NGO, Compassion International. Moreover, there has been a disturbing trend of vandalism at approximately 250 Christian places of worship between 2014 and 2016, accompanied by a rise in physical attacks on Christians.

### 3.1.2. MUSLIMS

With Hindutva in power, India's Muslims are being systematically disqualified as citizens, viewing them as the epitome of the "Other." This exclusion is fuelled by narratives associating Muslims with terrorism and their alleged connection with Pakistan. Additionally, historical grievances against the Mughals have been used to justify the disregard for Muslims, even removing international symbols like the Taj Mahal from state tourist promotion in Uttar Pradesh. Hindu nationalist campaigns, such as those against "love jihad", conversions, "land jihad", and cow

slaughter, primarily target Muslims, often conducted by ad hoc vigilante groups within the Sangh Parivar nexus, enabling the government to distance itself formally from anti-Muslim violence.

### "LOVE JIHAD" CAMPAIGN

The Hindutva "love jihad" campaign, originating in the 2000s, alleges that Muslim men aim to seduce Hindu girls and convert them to Islam, thereby increasing the Muslim population. It drew inspiration from the Communist Party in Kerala, which pioneered the "love jihad" campaign, which the RSS later adopted.<sup>16</sup> This narrative became explicit in 2014 when it received extensive coverage in RSS-affiliated magazines like "The Organiser" and "Panchjanya". For instance, Subramanian Swamy, who was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 2016, highlighted the demographic aspect, falsely claiming that the Muslim population was growing by 22%, while Hindus were at 1.5%. This false information was used to argue that "love jihad" was part of a larger conspiracy to increase the Muslim population.

Groups and networks were established to prevent interfaith marriages: organizations like the Hindu Behen Beti Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (Save Hindu Sisters and Daughters Committees), which help parents who oppose their daughters' marriages to Muslim men. In Rajasthan, Bajrang Dal activists relied on an informal intelligence network in courts and marriage registration offices to tip them off about interfaith marriages.

These efforts involved activists like Lalit Maheshwari, the district president of the VHP in Muzaffarnagar, who tried to persuade young Hindu women not to marry Muslim men by using emotional pressure. In Muzaffarnagar, Sangeet Som, an Uttar Pradesh state MP, emphasized the importance of moral pressure, claiming that Muslim men could have multiple wives and implying that Hindu girls would not adjust to such arrangements.

Furthermore, some Hindu activists used disinformation, intimidation, and coercive tactics. An RSS leader from Muzaffarnagar, Omkar Singh, claimed to have “rescued” girls from Muslim men and often filed false rape and kidnapping cases against Muslim boys. Sanjay Agarwal, a Hindu activist and BJP candidate, admitted to forcing false testimony from Hindu girls going out with Muslim boys and resorted to violence if persuasion failed.

The impact of the campaign against “love jihad” was influential, as parents sometimes turned to Hindu nationalist networks to bring their daughters back into the fold, even when they initially consented to interfaith marriages. Additionally, the police and the judiciary played roles in these operations, sometimes annulling marriages or supporting Sangh Parivar brigades in tracking down interfaith married couples.

In some instances, Sangh Parivar members openly supported violent actions, such as the lynching of a Muslim man accused of seducing a Hindu woman in Rajasthan. These acts received moral and financial support from Sangh Parivar cadres, including from BJP elected representatives.

The campaign also witnessed a phenomenon called “reverse love jihad”, where Hindu men married Muslim women, and organizations like the Hindu Jagran Manch claimed 2,100 such unions in 2017.

## ANTI-CONVERSION CAMPAIGN

The Ghar Wapsi campaign, which aimed at bringing Hindus who had converted to Islam or Christianity back into the Hindu fold, was promoted by the RSS and carried out by the Dharm Jagran Samiti (Religious Awakening Committee), but had its antecedence in the Congress Party, backed by all the secular groups, with anti-conversion laws dating back to the British Raj being built upon after Independence, e.g. the Congress-backed Himachal Pradesh Freedom of Religion Act 2006.<sup>17</sup> The RSS campaign began in November 2014, shortly after the anti-“love jihad” campaign was launched. The VHP's leader, Praveen Togadia, connected the two campaigns, emphasizing the need to protect the Hindu population and prevent demographic decline.

The reconversion ceremonies involved rituals such as purification around a sacred hearth fire and ablutions with water from holy rivers. During these ceremonies, individuals reverted to Hindu names and vowed not to perform Muslim or Christian rites, before being reintegrated into their respective castes. Key figures like Yogi Adityanath, a BJP MP and Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh from 2017, actively participated in these rituals, advocating for a widespread campaign involving millions of saints visiting villages.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat supported the Ghar Wapsi movement, emphasizing the idea that Hindus who had converted to other religions had lost their way or were lured away by material benefits. Conversion camps were set up to facilitate these reconversions, especially in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. However, controversy arose when it was revealed that some families agreed to convert in exchange for government-issued cards to access subsidized food shops. This led to discussions in parliament about anti-conversion laws.

The reconversion efforts also targeted Christians, with instances of Christian families facing pressure after other families in their village had converted back to Hinduism. Caste issues were intertwined in these conversion dynamics, with activists forcibly reconverting a young Dalit who had converted to Islam, citing discrimination by upper-caste individuals.

In many cases, the police in northern Hindi-speaking states remained passive or complicit in these reconversion activities, sometimes arresting individuals who had converted to Islam under the pretext of duress, even when it was not the case.

## LAND JIHAD

The “land jihad” campaign, orchestrated by Hindutva activists, aims to prevent Muslims from renting or buying property in Hindu-dominated areas. This practice, which has been observed since the 1990s, involves hindering Muslim access to housing in certain neighbourhoods. The term “land jihad” was coined later on to describe this phenomenon.

Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, for example, in 2017, the local BJP Yuva Morcha (BJPYM), a youth wing of the BJP, intervened in real estate transactions, justifying their actions by expressing a refusal to coexist with Muslims. They argued that as Muslims were buying properties, the cultural differences between Hindus and Muslims would alter the character of the area. This campaign seeks to maintain Hindu majorities in certain neighbourhoods and to prevent mixed living arrangements.

Although the mobilization for “land jihad” has not reached the scale of the “love jihad” campaign, it has led to efforts to exclude Muslims from mixed neighbourhoods. In Gurgaon, Hindu nationalist groups forcibly dispersed Muslims gathering for Friday prayers in public spaces they had traditionally used. This resulted in Muslims being confined to worship in Muslim-majority areas, further contributing to their segregation. The campaign reflects a broader effort to limit the public expression of Islam and confine worship to private spaces, reinforcing the dominance of Hinduism in the public sphere.

## LYNCHING TO PROTECT COWS

Between 2015 and 2018, a series of horrifying incidents of cow-related violence targeted Muslims in India. These incidents followed a similar pattern, with Muslims accused of cattle smuggling or consuming beef being brutally attacked and, in many cases, losing their lives. The series of attacks began with the murder of Mohammad Akhlaq on 28 September 2015, in Dadri, Uttar Pradesh. A mob, including the son of a local BJP leader, stormed Akhlaq's house, alleging that he had consumed beef.

They brutally beat him, leading to his death, and his son Danish was also seriously injured. Another tragic case was the lynching of Pehlu Khan, a dairy cow breeder who was attacked while transporting cattle he had legally purchased. Despite providing proof of his legal activities, he was beaten to death along with his sons.

These cow-related lynchings were not isolated incidents and occurred in various parts of India, including Rajasthan, West Bengal, Assam, Haryana, Gurgaon, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and more. In many cases, the victims were forced to chant slogans like “Jai Shri Ram” repeatedly as a form of humiliation before being attacked. These acts of violence were often recorded and shared on social media. The scale of these attacks prompted the Supreme Court to act, acknowledging the role of mobs and social media in inciting violence. However, the initiation and coordination of these campaigns were attributed to Hindu nationalist groups and the state apparatus they influenced, reflecting a broader effort to marginalize and segregate Muslim communities in India.

### 3.1.3. THE RISE OF STATE-BACKED VIGILANTISM

Since 2014, the Indian state has been accused of tacitly supporting vigilante groups that target minority communities, particularly Muslims. One prominent example is the Sanatan Sanstha, a radical Hindu organization implicated in the murders of rationalist activists. Despite evidence linking its members to violent crimes, the government refrained from banning the organization, allowing it to continue its activities. This was evident in cases such as the murders of Narendra

Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, and M. M. Kalburgi between 2013 and 2017, all of whom were known as “rationalists”.

Another instance of state backing for vigilante groups can be seen in the case of Pramod Muthalik and his organization, the Ram Sene. Muthalik, a former RSS member, openly engaged in moral policing and even planted bombs. Despite his controversial actions, in 2014, he was initially welcomed into the Karnataka section of the BJP, signalling a level of acceptance within the political sphere. While his membership was later revoked, it highlighted a willingness to embrace figures with extremist backgrounds.

The Bajrang Dal, a vigilante group affiliated with the RSS, has served as a conduit for individuals with radical ideologies to enter mainstream politics. Activists from the BD have transitioned into roles within the BJP, endorsed by the RSS. For example, Premi, a BD activist, became a district secretary of the BJP. Similarly, Pratap Chandra Sarangi, who was the state president of BD in Odisha during a period of violence, was appointed as a minister in the Modi government. His history of militancy and divisive statements were not obstacles to his political ascent.

The confluence of extremist ideologies within the Sangh Parivar, and the increasing influence of vigilante mindsets in politics, as exemplified by Yogi Adityanath's appointment as chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in 2017, points to a growing acceptance of radical elements within the Indian political landscape. This trend raises concerns about the state's role in accommodating and even endorsing vigilante groups that target minority communities, undermining the principles of secularism and religious pluralism.<sup>18</sup>

## 3.2. DISCRIMINATORY LEGISLATION IN INDIA

### 3.2.1. CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT ACT (CAA)

Passed in December 2019, the CAA is a controversial piece of legislation in India. It provides a pathway to Indian citizenship for certain religious minorities from neighbouring countries, namely Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. These religious minorities include Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians. Notably, the CAA explicitly excludes Muslims from this list. The CAA triggered massive protests across India. People from various backgrounds, including students, activists, and civil society, took to the streets to express their concerns about the law. About 1.5m Hindu foreigners look set to be fast-tracked into Indian citizenship.

### 3.2.2. NATIONWIDE NATIONAL REGISTER OF CITIZENS (NRC)

The CAA is linked to concerns about a potential nationwide National Register of Citizens (NRC). The NRC is a government exercise to identify and document citizens, and it has the potential to render many people stateless, especially Muslims who may not be able to provide the required documentation. The CAA, in conjunction with the NRC, could lead to the exclusion of Muslim immigrants who are unable to prove their citizenship, even after decades of residence. This is particularly acute in Assam, where 1.9 million undocumented people, many of them historic Muslim migrants from Bangladesh, have been residents in India for decades.

### 3.2.3. STATE ANTI-CONVERSION LAWS

Twelve Indian federal states out of 29 have passed anti-conversion laws, a long-term trend that has accelerated under Hindutva rule: Madhya Pradesh (1968), Arunachal Pradesh (1978), Orissa (now Odisha) (1967), Tamil Nadu (2002), Gujarat (2003), Himachal Pradesh (2006), Chhattisgarh (2006), Rajasthan (2008), Jharkhand (2017), Uttarakhand (2018), Uttar Pradesh (2020), and Karnataka (2022, passed then rescinded).

There are three key features of these anti-conversion laws that are inconsistent with international human rights standards:

**Prohibitions on Conversions:** These laws go beyond preventing coercive conversions and use broad and vague language that can potentially target voluntary religious conversions.

**Notification Requirements:** Several states require individuals involved in religious conversions to notify the government, which, according to international human rights law, should not compel individuals to reveal their religion or belief through such notice requirements. Reporting is designed to be coercive and restrict an individual's right to convert freely.

**Burden-Shifting Provisions:** In some states, individuals accused of violating anti-conversion laws must prove their innocence, contrary to the principle of presumption of innocence under international human rights law.<sup>19</sup>

### 3.2.4. PROPOSED UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

The BJP government is advocating for a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) to standardize personal laws in the country. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and tribal groups currently follow their own civil laws based on their religious and cultural traditions. The proposed UCC aims to create a common set of rules for various aspects, including marriage, divorce, succession, adoption, guardianship, and land and asset partition. The BJP uses the arguments for gender equality and national integration as cover to protect caste discrimination and erode minority religious rights. A draft of the UCC has yet to be released in the run-up to the 2024 elections.<sup>20</sup>

### 3.2.5. USE OF ANTI-TERROR LEGISLATION AGAINST MINORITIES

The Indian government both under Congress and later under the BJP has suppressed critical voices, particularly those of religious minorities and their advocates. This suppression involved surveillance, harassment, property demolition, and detention under laws like the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also faced scrutiny under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA). The Indian government extensively employed the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) and the Sedition Act to curb freedom of religion and expression. This created an atmosphere of intimidation and fear, leading to the surveillance, harassment, detention, and prosecution of journalists, lawyers, rights activists, and religious minorities. Many individuals arrested under the UAPA remain incarcerated with numerous pending cases.

### 3.2.6. COW PROTECTION LAWS AND VIGILANTE VIOLENCE

Since the BJP assumed power in 2014, several Indian states, including Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Haryana, Sikkim, and Madhya Pradesh, have amended cow protection laws, imposing stricter penalties for cow slaughter and, in some instances, criminalizing cattle transportation, possession, and sale. It is important to note that opposition to cow slaughter was a feature of the anti-colonial movement, and, after independence, cow protection laws began to be passed at the state level, as outlined in Article 48 of the Indian Constitution. These more recent legislative changes align with the establishment of the Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog (RKA) or the National Cow Commission in 2019, as part of the BJP government's commitment to protecting cows, with such measures coinciding with a surge in violence related to cow protection.

From 2016 to 2020, there were over 50 reported fatalities due to mob violence or lynching connected to suspected cow slaughter or trade. This surge in violence correlated with the rise of Hindutva political control in various states, such as Uttar Pradesh, Assam, and Jharkhand. Most of the violence targeted civilians involved in the cattle trade and minority groups, including Muslims, Dalits, and Adivasis. These groups have traditionally relied on the cattle industry for their livelihoods. Perpetrators of such violence often belonged to Hindutva organisations like the RSS, Hindu Yuva Vahini, Bajrang Dal, and the VHP.

While cow slaughter is banned in 20 out of 28 Indian states, the majority of violent incidents occur in states with stringent cow protection legislation.



Assam and Jharkhand recorded the highest fatalities from such violence. In states without cow slaughter bans, violence can still occur due to cattle theft, with smugglers often transporting cattle to Bangladesh.

State actors have not addressed cow vigilantism. Although there have been proposals like the Protection from Lynching Act (MASUKA), it has not been passed nationally. Only a few states have enacted laws against mob lynching. Moreover, increased powers granted to security forces in the name of cow protection have raised concerns about misuse.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.3. THE SHAHEEN BAGH PROTESTS IN DELHI, 2019-20

The Shaheen Bagh protests, which began in December 2019 and continued into early 2020, were a response to the contentious Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), National Register of Citizens (NRC), and National Population Register (NPR) introduced by the BJP government. The protests took place primarily in the Shaheen Bagh locality of New Delhi but quickly gained national attention. They were initiated by local women, including Bilkis Dadi and many other Muslim women, who felt directly targeted by these policies. These laws, seen as discriminatory against Muslims and other minority communities, led to a widespread movement challenging their constitutionality. The protesters particularly aimed to safeguard the rights and identity of Indian citizens from marginalized communities and to uphold the nation's commitment to diversity and secularism, as enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

The organizers and participants in the Shaheen Bagh protests came from diverse backgrounds and motivations. Bilkis Dadi, a prominent figure in the protests, was among those who took a leading role. The movement gained support from various segments of society, including students, activists, and ordinary citizens. It transcended religious boundaries, with people from different faiths participating to demand justice, equality, and the protection of fundamental rights. The protests reflected a collective effort to challenge the government's policies and reaffirm the importance of a genuinely inclusive India. The organizers and participants in the Shaheen Bagh protests came from diverse.

In response to the Shaheen Bagh protests, the government, led by the BJP and figures such as Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah, attempted to suppress the movement through various means. This included police repression, arrests, and charges of sedition against protesters. Additionally, there were efforts to discredit the protesters and label them as anti-national elements. Vigilante groups with affiliations to right-wing ideologies were also involved in counter-protests and occasionally resorted to violence. Despite these challenges and crackdowns, the women of Shaheen Bagh remained steadfast in their commitment to upholding the values of the Indian Constitution and continued to inspire similar protests and movements across the country throughout 2019 and early 2020.<sup>22</sup>



## 3.4. STAGES OF INCIPIENT GENOCIDE IN INDIA

A framework known as the “Ten Stages of Genocide” was developed by Gregory Stanton in 2006 to help understand the progression of genocidal processes. These stages are not necessarily linear, and they can overlap or occur in various sequences. In 2022, a study found that India has met eight out of the ten stages, enacting persecution of Muslims (Stage 8) while showing indicators of extermination (Stage 9).<sup>23</sup> Both the definition of each stage and the position of the genocidal threat that India’s Muslims face today are summarized below using a traffic light system.

### CLASSIFICATION

People are divided into distinct groups based on ethnicity, race, religion, or other characteristics. This can be formal (by government) or informal (by society).

- India is classifying religious groups, particularly Muslims, through policies and rhetoric that promote a Hindu-centric identity.
- The Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 (CAA) classifies immigrants based on religion, offering a fast track to citizenship for non-Muslims from neighbouring countries.
- Prominent politicians and religious leaders emphasize a Hindu-majority vision for India.

### SYMBOLIZATION

Groups are assigned symbols or names that serve to distinguish them from others. These symbols can be used to dehumanize or stigmatize the targeted group.

- Symbols and names that are being used to distinguish between Hindus and non-Hindus.
- Renaming places with Muslim heritage to Hindu names, as seen with cities and monuments, e.g. Allahabad to Prayagraj and Mughalsarai Junction to Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Junction. In 2023, it was proposed to change the name of India to Bharat.
- Symbols like the saffron flag and cow protection used to signify Hindu identity.

### DISCRIMINATION

Dominant groups use laws, customs, and practices to systematically discriminate against and marginalize the targeted group. This can include segregation, denial of rights, and unequal treatment.

- Systematic discrimination against Muslim communities, both socially and legally.
- Denial of basic rights and opportunities to Muslims, including restrictions on dietary choices and dress.
- Economic boycotting and social segregation of Muslim communities.

## DEHUMANIZATION

The targeted group is dehumanized through propaganda, hate speech, and stereotypes. They are often portrayed as less than human, making it easier for perpetrators to justify violence against them.

- Dehumanizing language and rhetoric are being used by Hindutva politicians and religious leaders against Muslims.
- Frequent use of derogatory terms like “jihadi” or “mullahs” to stereotype Muslims.
- Dehumanizing portrayals in right-wing media and political speeches.

## ORGANIZATION

Genocidal acts are often planned and conducted by organized groups, such as paramilitary organizations, militias, or the state's security forces.

- The Sangh Parivar and allied groups actively promote anti-Muslim agendas.
- Militant Hindu organizations like the VHP and Bajrang Dal advocate for the suppression of Muslim presence and culture.
- These groups often operate with impunity and have a significant following.

## POLARIZATION

Extremists push societies towards greater division by spreading hate and deepening social and political divisions. Moderate voices are often silenced or marginalized.

- Growing communal polarization within Indian society.
- Instances of Hindu nationalist groups marching through Muslim-majority areas, promoting communal tensions.
- Communal violence is disproportionately blamed on Muslim communities.

## PREPARATION

Perpetrators prepare for the genocide by stockpiling weapons, identifying victims, and establishing death camps or other facilities for mass killing.

- While not yet at the extermination stage, the groundwork for mass violence is being laid.
- Calls for Hindu boys to forcibly marry, rape, and impregnate Muslim women to alter demographics.
- Increasing instances of threats of violence against Muslims, indicating a dangerous trend.

## PERSECUTION

The targeted group is systematically subjected to violence, forced displacement, torture, and murder. Their property is often confiscated, and they are subjected to widespread suffering.

- Persecution of Muslim communities is already taking place.
- Violent attacks, lynchings, and mob violence against Muslims.
- Targeting of Muslim homes, businesses, and mosques for demolition. The bulldozer is the symbol of Hindutva India.

## EXTERMINATION

The genocide reaches its peak as mass killings, often systematic and organized, occur on a large scale. The goal is to eliminate the targeted group entirely.

- India is not yet at the extermination stage but indicates visible signs.
- Incitement to violence and calls for mass murder against Muslims.
- Growing instances of hate crimes, violence, and threats directed at Muslims.

## DENIAL

After the genocide, perpetrators and their supporters often try to deny or minimize the atrocities, blame the victims, or destroy evidence. This can perpetuate cycles of violence and hinder reconciliation and justice efforts.

- There is no evidence of denial of these actions.
- Authorities and perpetrators do not deny their involvement in acts of violence.
- However, there are efforts to blame victims and avoid accountability.

This framework serves as a comprehensive tool for understanding the progression of genocidal stages and emphasizes the importance of early intervention and prevention to halt the cycle of violence before it escalates to mass killings and genocide, which will be discussed in Section 7.<sup>24</sup>

## 3.5. THE ANNEXATION OF KASHMIR IN 2019 AND THE ALLIANCE WITH ISRAEL

The Indian annexation of Kashmir in August 2019, marked by the revocation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, bore significant parallels with Israeli policies in occupied territories. The move, initiated by the RSS and championed by the BJP, signified India's shift from being an administrator to a full-fledged colonizer, mirroring Israel's methods of exerting control. The RSS and BJP's campaign to dismantle Article 370 aimed at establishing Hindu-majority rule in Kashmir and eliminating privileges enjoyed by Muslims in the region. This agenda included framing Kashmir as an integral part of Hinduism's past, emphasizing temples and religious connections. The Indian government also intensified the Amarnath Yatra pilgrimage to strengthen spiritual ties with the region.

The revocation of Article 370 laid the groundwork for a settler-colonial project in Kashmir, potentially leading to the establishment of Hindu-only enclaves, similar to Jewish settlements in the West Bank. This demographic change was viewed as a provocation, undermining the historical absence of communal tensions between Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir. The Indian government's attempt to frame the Kashmir issue as a religious conflict downplayed its political roots and overstated the role of Islamic extremism, mirroring Israel's strategy in its occupied territories. Modi's government aims to change demographics in Kashmir by settling Indian Hindus in the region to bypass the political aspirations of Muslim Kashmiris and provide a long-term final solution to the Kashmir problem.

Leading up to the annexation, the Indian government imposed psychological trauma on the Kashmiri population, deploying additional troops, cutting off all communication, and placing local leaders under house arrest. A curfew was enforced, and the region was subjected to unprecedented restrictions, causing panic and uncertainty among the local population.

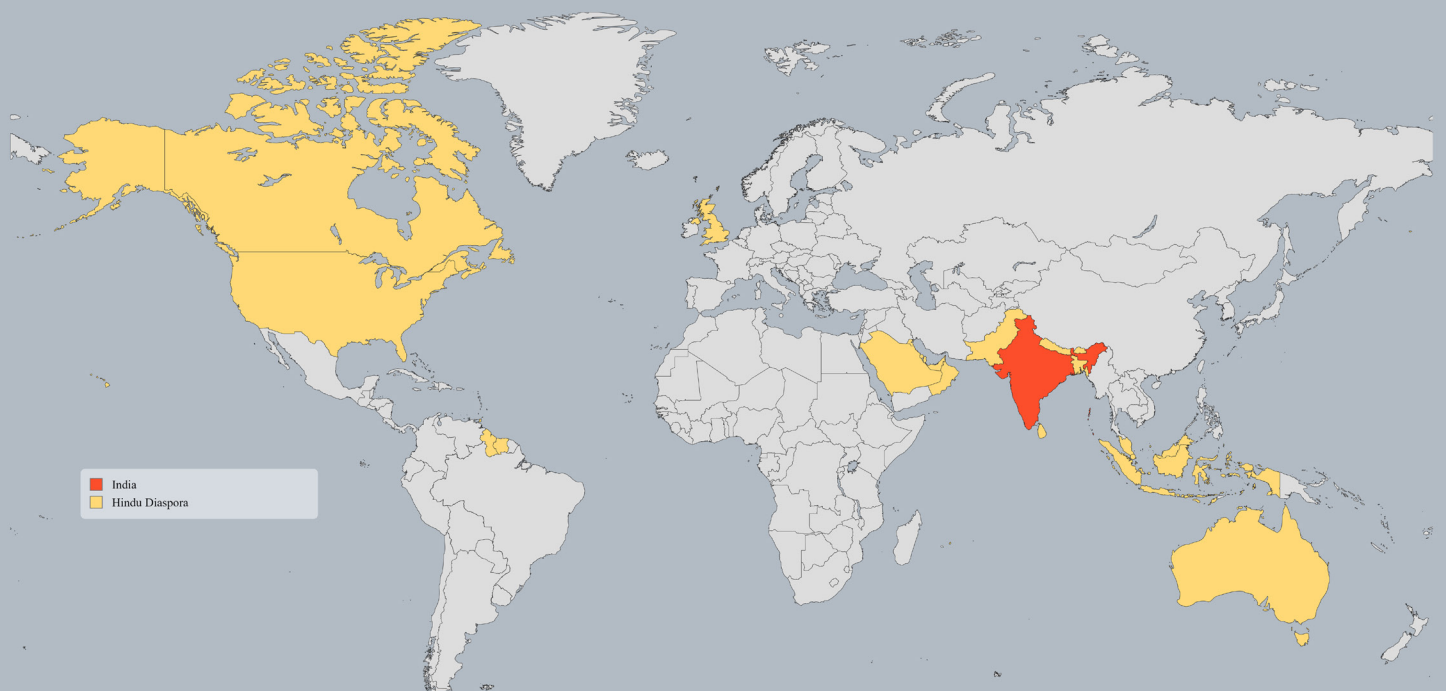
The alliance between India and Israel has deepened significantly since 2003, primarily driven by their shared concerns related to terrorism and their perception of a threat posed by "fanatic" Muslims. This alliance has manifested in several ways, including India's status as one of the top buyers of Israeli arms, joint counter-terrorism military exercises, and Israeli training for Indian special forces deployed in India's northern territories, including Kashmir.

Both nations use the justification of countering "barbaric", "backwards", and "misogynist" Muslims to militarize and overlook human rights violations in Palestine and Kashmir.

Hindutva and Zionism have found common ground in their exclusionary ideologies. Hindutva supporters view Muslims as threats to the nation, advocating for their conversion, departure, or relegation to second-class citizenship. This ideology erases the existence and history of Kashmir's majority Muslim population, undermining their indigenous identity and the pluralistic nature of Kashmiri society.

The Consul General's endorsement of the "Israel model" for Kashmir reflects the growing alliance between Hindutva and Zionist forces, especially following the siege of Kashmir in August 2019. This alignment, fuelled by anti-Muslim sentiments, has allowed India and Israel to dehumanize and exclude Indigenous communities, all while avoiding meaningful international intervention and scrutiny. Kashmiris are now facing an existential threat as India has revoked their semi-sovereign status, paving the way for increased corporate influence and colonial rule in the region.<sup>25</sup>

# 4. HINDUS IN THE DIASPORA



# 4.0. HINDUS IN THE DIASPORA

## 4.1. AVOIDING THE FALLACY OF DEMOGRAPHIC CORRELATION

The stereotyping fallacy of demography as a catch-all explanation that assumes a false correlation between size of Hindu diaspora populations and the extent of Hindutva influence must and should be avoided. That said, diasporic Hindu populations have long been the primary targets of Hindutva recruitment in the decades after Indian independence, so with this crucial caveat, a few facts on the Hindu diaspora itself are justified.

## 4.2. MAJOR HINDU MINORITY POPULATIONS

According to one recent estimate in 2020, only 6% of the world's Hindus live outside of India. There is only one other Hindu-majority nation besides India, which is Nepal. Major Hindu minority populations outside of the two majority Hindu nations, India and Nepal, with populations of over 500,000 include:

### HINDU MINORITY POPULATIONS

Countries	Pew Research, 2020 est.	US Dept of State, 2022
Bangladesh	13,790,000	13,260,000
Indonesia	4,210,000	4,710,000
Pakistan	3,990,000	3,890,000
Sri Lanka	3,090,000	2,920,000
United States	2,510,000	1,692,000
Gulf States	2,330,000	2,440,000
Malaysia	1,940,000	2,070,000
UK	1,030,000	1,150,000
Mauritius	640,000	620,000
Canda	610,000	650,000
South Africa	540,000	720,000
All Others	3,290,000	-

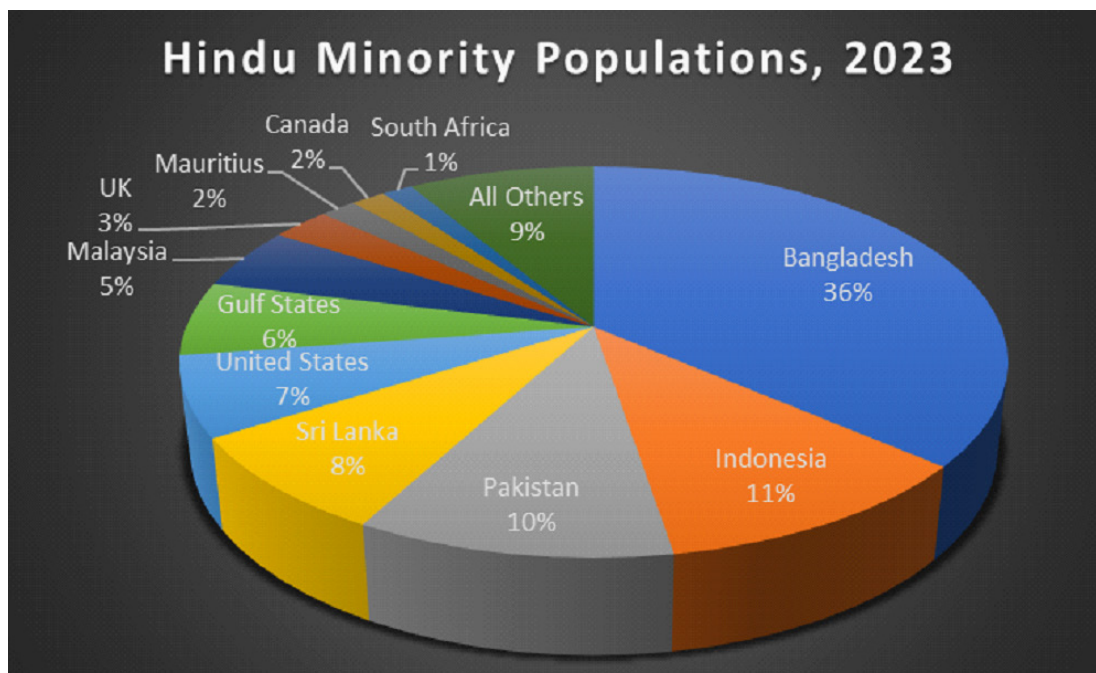
#### Sources:

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hindu-countries;>

[https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/;](https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-report-on-international-religious-freedom/)

[https://www.prii.org/research/2020-census-of-american-religion/.](https://www.prii.org/research/2020-census-of-american-religion/)

Over half of Hindu minorities live in South Asia in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka; 16% in Southeast Asia in Indonesia and Malaysia; 7% in the US, 6% in the Gulf States (seven in total: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Yemen, Oman and Bahrain), 3% in the UK, and 2% respectively in Mauritius and Canada. The largest Hindu minorities in South and Southeast Asia are the outcome of the long-term diffusion of Indian religious traditions over many centuries in the Indian Oceanic world, also known as the Indosphere, which long predates European colonialism or the formation of postcolonial states. For instance, Brahmanical and other Hindu ideas first came to Indonesia and Malaysia in antiquity or late antiquity. Hindu minority populations were also shaped by the disruptions caused by European colonialism within the Indosphere in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; in this period, Mauritius gained a significant Hindu population.



**Sources:**

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hindu-countries>



## 4.3. HINDU MINORITY POPULATIONS BY PERCENTAGE

Percentage-wise, there are significant Hindu minority populations in several small nation-states, particularly in the Arabian Gulf:

### HINDU MINORITY POPULATIONS

Country	% Hindus	Hindu Population
Mauritius	48.4	640,000
Fiji	27.9	270,000
Guyana	23.3	200,000
Bhutan	22.5	190,000
Trinidad and Tobago	22.3	310,000
Suriname	18.8	110,000
Qatar	15.9	360,000
Sri Lanka	13.7	3,090,000
Bahrain	10.2	150,000
Kuwait	9.9	330,000
Bangladesh	8.2	13,790,000
United Arab Emirates	7.7	660,000
Singapore	6.5	380,000
Malaysia	5.8	1,940,000
Oman	5.7	190,000

**Sources:**

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/hindu-countries>

# 5. GLOBAL HINDUTVA AS LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM OUTSIDE INDIA: AN OVERVIEW



# 5.0. GLOBAL HINDUTVA AS LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM OUTSIDE INDIA: AN OVERVIEW

## 5.1. THE SALIENCE OF LONG-DISTANCE NATIONALISM

The key insight about global Hindutva is that it is an exemplary case of “long-distance nationalism”. In other words, parts of the Hindu diaspora have been directed to advance the cause of global Hindutva in a highly centralized and co-ordinated way, something which has been accelerated since the BJP took power in 2014.

The RSS set up its first overseas branch in Nairobi, Kenya, in 1947. Today, the Overseas Friends of the BJP have branches in 46 countries, with significant political and financial influence in the newer parts of the Hindu diaspora.

The model of the Sang Parivar, the family of Hindutva organisations, has been successfully exported but also adapted to the newer Hindu diasporas in the West (the United States, Canada and Britain) and, to a lesser extent, the Arabian Gulf. A favourable climate for ethnic mobilisation facilitated this on grounds of cultural recognition and anti-racism.<sup>26</sup> This is less true of the older and ancient Hindu diasporas within the Indosphere, where, except for Indonesia, Hindu minorities have much less room for manoeuvre. Within the Indosphere, the chief danger lies in the mutual feedback of competitive religious and secular nationalisms in South Asia.

## 5.2. THE GLOBAL HINDUTVA PLAYBOOK

The Global Hindutva playbook shares similarities with both Israeli and Russian strategies and tactics but retains some unique features of its own. The key thing about Global Hindutva is its centralization and scale. The drive for global Hindutva is driven from and inspired by India, but what marks it out is the size of India’s economy, now the third largest by PPP measures behind China and America, and its growing economic and therefore political influence, which solidifies Hindutva’s influence globally.

### 5.2.1. IDEOLOGICAL LEADERSHIP

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) since the 1940s has been the most powerful Hindutva organisation which undertakes ideological and paramilitary training across nearly 60,000 chapters in India. It claims that membership doubled from eight million in 2008 to 16 million in 2019, figures that need independent verification.

### 5.2.2. CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTROL

The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) aims to develop a national Hindu sentiment and allegiance among all Hindus, as the metric by which authenticity as a Hindu is measured. The 1992 demolition of the Babri Mosque with the building of Ram temple in its place was designed as a litmus test of authentic Hinduness and was essential to the growth of Hindutva ideology in India.

### 5.2.3. STATE CAPTURE

Through its political wing since 1980, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Hindutva seeks to capture or control all the governmental levers of power. In 2020, the BJP claimed 180 million members. In the last two national elections of 2014 and 2019, diasporic supporters have been mobilized to help win electoral victories.

### 5.2.4. EDUCATIONAL INFLUENCE

Building its own network of schools through various programmes like Vidya Bharti and Ekal Vidyalaya.

### 5.2.5. NEW HINDUTVA HISTORY

The idea of Islam as an aberration in Indian history, as a break from Brahmanical traditions became standard during the formation of Hindu nationalist movements in the nineteenth century, such as the Arya Samaj. Medieval India was now portrayed as a period of both Hindu bondage and Hindu resistance as a precursor to the anti-colonial struggle. A particularly potent myth has been that of Hindu genocide between 1000 and 1800 under Muslim rule.

After independence, a Marxist approach came to the fore that exploded nationalist, religious and colonial myths through rigorous source criticism: of particular importance was the undermining of the “two-nation” theory in favour of what Indian Marxist historians saw as India’s composite past. This was intended to buttress secular politics and undermine ideas of a Hindu Rashtra.

An insurgent Hindutva narrative to counter the secular Nehruvian historical narrative first gained real ground from 1999 onwards under the BJP-led government. Secular school textbooks had to be rewritten to valorise the Vedic period, propagate the tyranny of medieval Muslim rule, and so forth. This counter-narrative was first pushed through the Sangh Parivar’s school networks. Often these revisionist Hindutva textbooks pushed outright falsifications, such as the claim that the Qutb Minar completed by the Delhi Sultanate in the 13th century was constructed by Samudragupta, or that Alauddin Khalji put a 50% land tax on Hindus.

This revisionist approach was extended to the national curriculum in 2002, which abandoned the study of medieval Indian history, or the period of Muslim rule, seen as an era of imposed degeneration. The goal of the 2002 textbooks was to homogenize a Hindu history that bound all Hindus together under a common culture, which could only be achieved through deep decontextualization. This era also witnessed the defunding and exclusion of Marxist historians who pushed the older secular line. The goal was to exclude the unholy trinity of “Macaulay, Marx and Madrasa”. While the revised textbooks were only used in about 10% of India’s schools in the 2000s, it was widely debated, pitting two views of Indian history and two views of how history ought to be done against each other. The bipolar contest between the BJP and Congress, expressed as rival national stories, also excluded alternative versions such as those offered by Muslims and other marginalised groups. In 2014 when the BJP returned to power, the Indian Council of Historical Research was reorganised to be amenable to Hindutva narratives.

The most immediate political impact of mythmaking and remaking India as a Hindu Rashtra can be seen in the Ayodhya controversy, the key episode that truly marked the beginning of the BJP's electoral hegemony in later years. Central to it was the myth that Mughal emperor Babur had ordered the destruction of a temple dedicated to Ram and built a mosque in its place. The Hindutva state has provided support, both direct and tacit, for the vigilante destruction of Muslim historical sites including other mosques and Sufi shrines. Ambitious plans to rebuild central Delhi, known as the Central Vista Plan, would entail destroying much of the old Mughal city.<sup>27</sup>

### 5.2.6. ORGANIZED ONLINE HARASSMENT OF CRITICS

The BJP and its allies employ sophisticated social media tactics to target individuals critical of Hindutva and Hindu supremacy. The BJP's IT Cell orchestrates coordinated online attacks to silence dissent and create an illusion of widespread discontent.

- The BJP's IT Cell utilizes a dedicated and automated social media operation to respond to perceived criticism on social media platforms.
- The Indian state, under the BJP administration, coordinates activities with the IT Cell to suppress inconvenient information both domestically and internationally.
- Diasporic Hindutva organizations in the Anglosphere (the US, Canada, Britain, Australia, etc.) actively engage in online activism in line with the IT Cell.

- Online Hindutva harassment involves coordinated attacks on individuals through tweets, posts, petitions, and email complaints.
- An organisation that tracks disinformation, the EU DisinfoLab, found in 2019 a global network of fake news sites designed to spread pro-BJP, Hindutva and anti-Pakistan disinformation. Two hundred and sixty-five of these sites were registered to one company, the Srivastava Group in Delhi.

### 5.2.7. THE CREATION OF SEGMENTED INFORMATION

This informational segmentation is achieved through news channels and information ecosystems or bubbles in which Hindutva narratives of inclusion and exclusion predominate.

### 5.2.8. DIVERSIFICATION OF FUNDRAISING CHANNELS

To avoid targeted sanctions and boycotts and to create resilience and robustness.

### 5.2.9. STRONG NARRATIVES AGAINST HINDUTVA'S OUTCASTS

These outcasts are rejected on grounds of xenophobia, racism, casteism, misogyny and Islamophobia. This includes the spread narratives of grievance and victimhood underpinned by mythologizing history and the present-day to present a revitalized Hindu India and its diaspora as vulnerable and surrounded by enemies. This includes the promotion of policies promoting India-first and India as the protector of Hindus everywhere in the diaspora, which have been consciously modelled on Israeli strategies, although with some tactical innovation.<sup>28</sup>



### 5.3. THE UNITED STATES: THE NEW FRONTIER OF GLOBAL HINDUTVA

Hindus have been present in the US since the 19th century. However, there was a fast-growing post-1965 growth in the Hindu population in the United States, developing a diaspora that is highly educated and wealthy. Merrill Lynch classes 200,000 Indian Americans as millionaires and so they are unsurprisingly the wealthiest ethnic group in the US. It has long been targeted by Hindutva groups; a process that has intensified since the BJP came to power in 2014. Historically this mobilisation dates back to the 1970s and like in other parts of the Anglo-American sphere the work began with youth and cultural programmes and charitable work. The aim was to foster a Hindu diasporic community that either deliberately ignores or actively supports Hindutva violence and discrimination, despite the fact that successive US governments have pointed this out since the 1990s. Hindutva narratives in the US focus on experiences of racism and anti-Hindu sentiment and foster cultural pride in a Vedic, upper-caste outlook. It is the centrepiece of global Hindutva's mobilisation today.

- There are said to be 222 chapters of the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) in the U.S., the global outreach branch of the RSS, operating in 32 states and 166 cities, with around 8,880 participants in its youth and family programming.
- The Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America operates 21 chapters in 14 states, often using different names for its cultural projects.
- Between 2001–2019, Sangh-affiliated charitable groups spent at least \$158.9 million on programming, with much of it sent to groups in India.
- There are three elements of Hindutva political pressure applied to US politics: lobbying of diasporic groups, campaign financing and direct lobbying by the Indian government. HSS volunteers coordinated by visits to one hundred Congressional offices. Between \$15–58,000 spent monthly by the BJP per lobby group endeavouring to influence US policies. Significant monies raised to support election campaigning between 2012–20 by the Hindu American Foundation (HAF) and the Hindu American Political Action Committee (HAPAC) and direct support for pro-BJP Congress member Raja Krishnamoorthi.
- Congressional campaigns with the five Congress members who receive Hindutva funding have been (i) removal of the visa ban denying Modi entrance to the US (2013) in connection with the 2002 anti-Muslim pogrom in Gujarat, (ii) revision of US textbooks to reflect Hindutva narratives, and (iii) Revocation of House Resolution 725 on Kashmir, on grounds that it is an internal Indian matter.
- Significant work to influence school curricula in the US on Hinduism and Indian history and to influence academic debate. The goal is to introduce narratives to school textbooks that centres caste-privileged Hindus while ignoring Dalits and Adivasis and demonizing Muslims, which operates on a mythology of India ignoring or distorting actual historical evidence. Efforts were made in this

direction in California in 2015, echoing earlier work in India in the 2000s. Hindutva has struggled to compete with established academic historians of India but tries to fund alternate academic programmes, e.g. the Dharma Civilization Foundation in Californian universities or to harass established historians who are critical of Hindutva mythmaking.

- Development of a significant funding arm in the US Hindu community to support Hindutva political campaigns including wealthy philanthropists like Shingal, Thakkar and Sahota families, more traditional fundraising channels, bodies like the Bhutada and Puran Devi Aggarwal Family Foundations, and the use of US tax exemptions for charitable Hindutva bodies
- The Hindutva lobby has worked towards bipartisan influence in American politics. Although Trump's chemistry with Modi is well known, it should be noted that it was Obama who lifted Modi's visa restriction and the Biden administration has appointed four individuals to government positions with demonstrable Hindutva links.<sup>29</sup>

## 5.4. GREAT BRITAIN: A NEW FRONTLINE FOR GLOBAL HINDUTVA

Britain is home to over a million Hindus and is regarded by the BJP as a key target and asset in the spread of global Hindutva.

Global Hindutva has long roots. The first HSS branch (the global wing of the RSS) was set up in Nairobi in 1947 targeting the Gujarati traders who had settled there, and occupied a middle position in the colonial

hierarchy, above the Africans. Leaving East African states such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi during the postcolonial wave of Africanization, these twice-migrants faced both racism and loss of class status in 1970s Britain. The message of cultural pride and dignity that the HSS made struck a chord in such circumstances. Branches were set up in Leicester, Birmingham, Harrow and Brent where the refugees had settled; in the same period, women from these communities also led the famous industrial actions in Grunwick, Leicester and Brent. As the BJP rose to prominence, the destruction of the Ayodhya Mosque in 1992 sparked intercommunal violence in the UK, while the pogrom of Gujarat's Muslims in 2002 found quiet support among these communities. This support was not only garnered ideologically but through social action with initiatives such as the HSS's Sewa Day, the reconfiguration of hurt Hindu pride founded upon an anti-racist and anti-imperialist discourse fuelled by the vernacular discourse found in British Hindu temples, and the development of distinctively British Hindu styles of public protests, such as the M.F. Husain exhibition of 2006, as well as of national representation through the Hindu Council of Britain. Some of the important Hindutva-linked organisations in the UK include Sewa UK, Param Shakti Peeth UK, Insight UK, and the Centre for Democracy, Pluralism and Human Rights.<sup>30</sup> Some academic specialists speak of neo-Hindutva in the Hindu diaspora as a process of adaptive vernacularisation rather than it being an unchanged export from the homeland.



In the last twenty years, Hindutva in Britain has become increasingly assertive politically, with two leading representative organisations in particular taking the lead, the Hindu Forum of Britain and the National Council of Hindu Temples.<sup>31</sup> One of the first campaigns undertaken was to counter the Labour government's commitment to make caste discrimination part of the Equality Act 2010. This had come after a decade of campaigning from Dalit organisations, but Hindutva pressure upon the Conservatives rendered it a dead letter. A young, upwardly-mobile Hindu community has shifted its historic political party allegiances in the last decade: support for Labour fell from 61% (2010) to 40% (2021) while support for the Tories grew from 24% (2010) to 30% (2021). Hindu Tory donors and politicians like Lord Jitesh Gadhia, RSS-supporting Priti Patel, and the PM, Rishi Sunak (whose father-in-law, Infosys founder Narayana Murthy backed Modi for his second term) look to cement the alliance between India as post-Brexit Britain looks to re-secure its place. Major trade talks began in 2022 and are still ongoing.

#### 5.4.1. LEICESTER 2022 – HINDUTVA STREET VIOLENCE COMES TO EUROPE

Long before the emergence of Hindutva street violence in Leicester in 2022, the city had developed a reputation for interfaith and communal harmony. That said, there were some warning signs that this was changing: in 2018, there was a concerted effort to prevent a mosque being established in Belgrave in North Leicester – many of the 1500 complaints received remarked it would cause intercommunal tensions in what was perceived of as a “Hindu area”; in the 2019 General Election,

an “Operation Dharmic Vote” put out messages in support of the Conservative candidate in Leicester East, calling the incumbent Labour MP “poison”.<sup>32</sup> In 2022, tensions grew after the growth of anti-social behaviour among new Indian migrants from Damman who had settled in Leicester via Portuguese citizenship just before Brexit; many had settled in North Evington where many Muslims lived. Based on interviews with local residents there, the writers of this report found that for months there had been very loud drunken parties, and filling up side streets with cars playing loud music. These new migrants often chanted loudly outside a prominent mosque in the area, and on one occasion at least, the mosque exterior was urinated upon. In May 2022, a Muslim youth was beaten up and hospitalized after being asked to give his name and religion. Between August and September (see Appendix I for a detailed timeline), tensions grew after Hindutva chants were made in Belgrave by youths after an Indian victory over Pakistan in a cricket match. Thereafter, a number of individual attacks on a Sikh man, a Muslim traffic warden and a Muslim teenager, increased tensions. Between 17–21 September came the height of the unrest in Leicester. Some 2–300 masked Hindu youth, some armed, were allowed by understaffed local police (overstretched on the weekend of Queen Elizabeth II's state funeral), to march over two miles from the northern district of Belgrave to the eastern district of North Evington, chanting “Victory to Lord Ram”. They were challenged by Muslim youth. Subsequently over seventy arrests between September and December showed that most had come from Leicester or Birmingham, with some coming from London and Market Harborough.

### 5.4.2. BRITAIN'S HINDUTVA LOBBY MOBILIZES

At the height of the disturbances, on 19 September, the Indian High Commission condemned Muslim youth while saying nothing about the violence and provocation of Hindu youths. The wording of its statement, speaking of “violence against the Indian community in Leicester” implied that the Indian-heritage Muslims were not counted as Indian, as it only condemned the pulling down of a flag from a Hindu temple in Belgrave. On 26 November, Leicester’s Labour mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby, announced an independent review would be headed by local academic, Prof. Chris Allen. This was opposed by the Council of Hindu and Jain Temples in Leicester who said he was biased. Shortly thereafter he stepped down after receiving elevated levels of online abuse, and no one was appointed in his place. In May 2023, the government appointed its own reviewer, Lord Austin, an independent peer, over the objections of Leicester’s mayor, and local and national Muslim groups, because he was biased, based on his comments about Palestinians on social media. At the time of writing, he remains in post.

The Leicester unrest has shown that the old guard of Leicester’s Muslim leadership and their political allies in the local Labour Party were completely unprepared and slow to react when unrest began to brew in the city between May and September 2022. Instead, in the face of provocations from Hindu youth, first in the form of anti-social behaviour but then escalating to attacks, Muslim youth responded at the street level, when the police were slow to react.

What became even more apparent in the weeks and months after the unrest was the discipline and confidence of the Hindutva lobby in Britain, which is increasingly backed by the Conservative Party. Conversely, Leicester’s Muslim community has lost trust in the Labour Party because it was prepared to put up Hindutva-supporting Hindu candidates for local elections, e.g. at the North Evington by-election of 2022 – it was beaten into third place. Rajul Tejura, the Labour candidate, was known to have thrown a huge party in celebration of Modi’s victory in 2019.

Satish Sharma of the National Council for Hindu Temples (MCHT), a prominent Brexit supporter and successful campaigner to remove caste as a protected characteristic (removed by Teresa May in 2018), echoed the line of the Indian High Commission in focusing on the destruction of the flag, ignoring the months of provocation beforehand. He portrayed British Hindus as a model, law-abiding community in comparison with criminalized British Muslims (18% Muslims, 1% Hindus in British jails). This line was repeated in a letter to the short-lived PM, Liz Truss, sent on 14 October and signed by 180 Hindu community organisations. The letter called for an enquiry into anti-Hindu hatred and its causes and to recognise the threat of homegrown (read, Muslim) extremism in Britain. The lobby then turned its ire on the BBC, when it accused the BBC of anti-Hindu coverage in a public letter on 28 October, in which it emphasized British Hindus as an economically significant community.

Later, a two-part BBC documentary on Modi's role in the Gujarat pogrom of 2002 revealed the contents of an enquiry undertaken by British officials at the time which concluded that it had all the "hallmarks of ethnic cleansing", a revelation that was later dismissed out of hand by Rishi Sunak at Prime Minister's Questions in Parliament. A protest was organised outside Broadcasting House, access to the documentary was banned online in India, and the Indian government later raided the BBC's offices in Mumbai and New Delhi as part of a proposed tax evasion investigation. As mentioned, Britain's Hindutva lobby had already succeeded in killing the Leicester mayor's independent review and eventually succeeded in getting the government to conduct its own review and appoint a reviewer much more to its liking.

The fallout from the 2022 Leicester unrest shows that the Hindutva lobby has successfully allied itself with the Conservative government through which it can promote familiar themes of a model Hindu community while demonizing British Muslims. One developing theme is to take the moral panic in Britain over the so-called cultural link between grooming gangs and Pakistani men and attach it to Hindutva rhetoric on "love jihad". Another is to push Hinduphobia up the political agenda as another way of politically marginalizing British Muslims through bad faith accusations, a tactic already made familiar through accusations of anti-Semitism that target pro-Palestinian activism, as both main political parties have adopted the sweeping IHRA definition. The election of Rishi Sunak as PM provides an exemplar of the model Hindu community that the Hindutva

lobby wishes to promote as a highly educated, patriotic, economically successful community that is committed to family values. It is also making inroads into the Labour Party, which has dropped its opposition to the annexation of Kashmir shortly after the 2019 election, while Keir Starmer promised to tackle Hinduphobia in 2022.<sup>33</sup>

## 5.5. CANADA: GROWING BJP INFLUENCE IN A MULTICULTURAL NATION

Canada is home to over 600,000 Hindus and the rise of Hindutva-affiliated groups in Canada has been a gradual process over several years, with their activities spanning various domains. These organizations, often associated with RSS and its global affiliates, have gained prominence in Canadian politics and within the Indian diaspora. This trend began in the early 1990s but has significantly intensified in recent years, particularly after the BJP came to power in India in 2014.

These groups have actively propagated Hindutva ideology in Canada, seeking to influence the Indian diaspora. These groups include the Overseas Friends of BJP (OFBJP), which operates in multiple countries, including Canada. They have been instrumental in fundraising for the BJP, India's ruling party. Another organization, the Canada India Global Forum (CIGF), formerly known as OFBJP Canada, maintains close ties with the BJP and has hosted BJP officials in Canada. They openly support the BJP's decisions, such as the annexation of Jammu & Kashmir, causing controversy and tensions within the Indian diaspora community in Canada.

Additionally, Hindutva-affiliated individuals have become increasingly involved in Canadian politics, with some holding positions within political parties. They organize public events, webinars, and meetings, featuring prominent leaders from India who support Hindutva and the BJP's policies. These activities have grown in frequency since the early 2000s.

Controversial figures, such as Anurag Thakur, a BJP parliamentarian and government minister in India, have been invited to speak at events in Canada, despite their controversial roles and statements. Thakur's notoriety stems from his inflammatory rhetoric during protests against the Citizenship Act in India, which took place in January 2020.

These groups also oppose the recognition of the 1984 Sikh Genocide in Canada, leading to tensions with the Sikh community and elected officials who support recognition. Their influence has raised concerns about foreign interference and sparked controversy within Canadian minority communities, particularly among Sikhs.

One such group, the Hindu Forum Canada, has been involved in various initiatives and events to advocate for their vision of Hinduism. For instance, in May 2020, they complained about the call to prayer (adhan) being broadcast through mosques' loudspeakers in Mississauga, Ontario, and expressed their opposition to it, citing cultural and noise concerns.<sup>34</sup>

Even more dramatically than the promotion of Hindutva-inspired street violence in the UK in 2022 (see Section 5.4 above), the targeted assassination of

Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar in June 2023, a peaceful supporter of an independent Sikh state (Khalistan) in the Punjab, outside his own gurdwara, showed the lengths India was prepared to go to silence its critics abroad. After failing to respond to the Canadian Prime Minister's concerns put directly to Modi at the G20 summit in Delhi, Justin Trudeau went public in September and claimed that India had ordered the assassination based on "Five Eyes" intelligence. However, the muted or silent reaction to the revelation left Canada isolated and revealed how much the West now relies on India's booming economy and hopes to keep her as a political counterweight to China and Russia.<sup>35</sup>

## 5.6. THE GULF STATES: REMITTANCES AND INDIA'S GROWING ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT

India has the largest number of migrants globally, unsurprisingly, given that it is the world's most populous nation. Currently, the Gulf-India region is the second-largest migration network in the world. It is estimated that two-thirds of India's overseas citizens (8.9m out of 13.6m) live in the Gulf, the majority of whom are Muslims. Like other non-Gulf citizens, citizenship is not granted by the Gulf states, as the dividends of hydrocarbon rents devolved to the original inhabitants and their descendants. This remains the case as Gulf citizens became minorities in their own societies, with foreign workers making up most of the population (70% on average), who are essential to the region's post-hydrocarbon diversification strategies, yet their economic and political

rights remain highly limited. The kafala sponsorship system where a worker is assigned to a particular employer severely hampers job mobility. As such, it is unsurprising that Hindu residents like other non-citizens have until recently tended to stay away from controversy of any kind.

Currently, India has the highest inward flow of remittances globally, nearly \$90bn annually. A recent study from 2016–7 found that the top five remittance-sending countries to India were the UAE (27%), the USA (23%), Saudi Arabia (12%), Qatar (7%) and Kuwait (5%). However, this does not oblige India politically to these Gulf States and America to any great degree. The main receiving areas are southern Indian federal states that received half of all remittances: Kerala (19%), Maharashtra (17%), Karnataka (15%) and Tamil Nadu (8%). Besides Karnataka and Delhi (5%), none of these are electoral strongholds for the BJP. Additionally, remittances only account for 3% of India's economy, unlike, for instance, Pakistan, where they account for 10% of its GDP.

After the BJP's second election victory in 2019, incidents of Islamophobic statements in the UAE and Bahrain led to a handful of deportations and a diplomatic spat over insults directed at the Prophet Muhammad by two BJP officials, which was quickly smoothed over.

After the 2008 Financial Crash, the Gulf states looked to China and India for greater economic and political security. Economic ties have deepened: the UAE and Saudi Arabia now rank in India's top five trading partners. The volume of trade with the GCC states is over \$150bn with India having a

trade deficit due to oil imports. The GCC states represent 15% of India's global trade and supply a third of its fuel.

Additionally, some of the Indian diaspora have done well: the UAE has an estimated 13 billionaires of Indian heritage. Modi has courted these rich businessmen to support his settler colonial takeover of Jammu & Kashmir through investments. Politically, Modi has been showered with the highest civilian honours by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain. The only exception to this laudation is Kuwait, which, as a more democratic country, has been more vocal about the treatment of Muslims in India (the only Gulf country Modi has not visited).

The Gulf States do have leverage given that its high-net-worth Indian residents are among the largest donors to the BJP (as are non-resident Indians generally) and India depends on its fuel. On the other hand, they are more dependent on Indian skilled and unskilled labour than India is economically on the Gulf and US remittances and certainly Modi is not politically reliant on any of the Gulf states.

The deciding factor is that the majority of Gulf States, particularly the UAE and Saudi Arabia, share with India the view that politicized Islam is a shared threat, and this may well be the decisive factor in developing economic ties without taking a stand for India's Muslims or over the annexation of Jammu & Kashmir. Those who have tended to be more critical of the BJP, like Kuwait and Qatar, have not taken decisive action on these issues.<sup>36</sup>

## 5.7. PAKISTAN: MARGINAL HINDUS AND GEOPOLITICAL TENSIONS

According to the 2017 Census about 1.6% of Pakistan's population is Hindu. A significant majority of Pakistani Hindus, about 96%, reside in rural areas of Sindh, with concentrations in the Sanghar and Tharpakar districts. Hindus in the interior of Sindh or Baluchistan often belong to the Scheduled Castes, facing social stigma and exploitation as landless bonded laborers. Sindh once had a substantial Hindu population, but many migrated to India during the partition of India in 1947, resulting in violent campaigns against religious minorities. While constitutional guarantees in Pakistan allow non-Muslims to practise their religion freely, the Hindu community has been a target of suspicion and discrimination. Hindus in Pakistan lack representation in the higher echelons of administration, bureaucracy, and the armed forces, and say they face discrimination and prejudice within wider society. Along with other minorities, they argue that their numbers are undercounted in the census for political reasons. Hindu leaders in Sindh and Baluchistan report that the police have provided inadequate security during major festivals. Some of the challenges Hindus in Pakistan face include:

- Attacks on Hindu and other minority holy places and religious symbols.
- Ongoing forced conversion and marriage of Hindu Christian and Hindu women, estimates vary between 100 to 500 per year.
- A small number of sectarian murders of Hindus including other non-Muslim minorities like Sikhs and Christians, often motivated by charges of blasphemy.

- A small number of Hindus are accused of breaking blasphemy laws (1.2% of cases between 1987 and 2021)
- In Karachi, lower-caste Hindus and Christians report land confiscations from local criminals with the assistance of corrupt officials
- Inadequate protections for Christians and Hindu Dalits from bonded labour practices, forcing multiple generations to work the same plot of land for debts alleged to be owed to landowners. The same indentured labour practices exist in the brick kiln industry, affecting some eight million people, mostly either Hindu Dalits or Christians.

There is no evidence of any kind of sustained Hindutva influence in Pakistan. Rather, longstanding tensions between the two countries play out at a geopolitical level, which are exacerbated by the rise of Hindutva, especially since the BJP government came to power in 2014:

- Hindutva rhetoric directly opposes Pakistan's identity as a Muslim-majority nation. Some see Pakistan as part of a future greater Hindu nation with expanded borders in South Asia. Although it is a debatable point, India's more secular identity in the past may have historically provided some kind of buffer against overt continuous conflict with Pakistan.
- Given the greater threat that India now poses, anti-Indian sentiment plays directly into Pakistan's national cohesion and identity.
- Anti-Muslim rhetoric and violence within is seen as an example of anti-Pakistan sentiment, strengthening the notion that Hindus and Muslims require separate countries to coexist.



- The BJP revoked Article 370 in Jammu & Kashmir and militarily occupied the country, implemented a National Register of Citizens (NRC), and passing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) to grant fast-track citizenship to non-Muslims from neighbouring Muslim-majority countries such as Pakistan.
- Under Modi, India has moved towards a first-strike policy with regard to its nuclear arsenal, mirroring Pakistan's own stance.<sup>37</sup>

## 5.8. BANGLADESH: LEVERAGING VOTES IN WEST BENGAL

Over the last decade, communal violence against Hindu temples and nearly 4000 attacks on Hindus since January 2013 in Bangladesh, has been exploited by the BJP in West Bengal to its electoral advantage in federal state elections. Its share of seats has risen from 2 in 2014 to 18 in 2019. This appeal is driven by a narrative of West Bengal turning into “West Bangladesh” by Hindutva groups since 2014 and is a central theme of their Bengal campaign. This narrative is based on historical figures like Syama Prasad Mookerjee and aims to portray West Bengal as a homeland for Bengali Hindus, contrasting it with Bangladesh. Prominent spokespersons of the theory include former RSS officials Dilip Ghosh and Mohit Ray. It has intensified during communal clashes, anti-CAA protests, and other incidents involving Hindus in West Bengal. It seeks to undermine the shared cultural heritage between West Bengal and Bangladesh and portrays Bangladesh as an “evil land”.<sup>38</sup> Among Bangladesh's Hindus, there is some attempt by RSS-linked organisations to

propagate their ideology in some 3–400 Vedic schools, to promote the “love jihad” galvanise them as an independent voting block rather than as a taken-for-granted vote for the Awami League. Additionally, some Hindu leaders in Bangladesh like Monindra Kumar Nath argue that India's discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) holds no real appeal to Hindus in the country. Despite communal tensions, the preference is to face problems at home. To that end, the Hindu community is seeking a minority affairs minister and a minority affairs commission to safeguard their rights.<sup>39</sup>

## 5.9. NEPAL: THE POSSIBILITY OF HYBRID SOCIALIST HINDUTVA NATIONALISM

Eighty-one per cent of Nepal's population is Hindu, with 14% of these being Dalits, as well as having Buddhists (9%), Muslims (4.4%), Christians (1.4%), and other groups. That said, the political culture remains dominated by Chinese influence, producing a coalition government formed by the United Socialist Party, the CPN (Maoist Centre) and the People's Socialist Party. The most vocal party in the parliament is the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party which is aligned with the Juche ideology of North Korea. However, all mainstream parties adhere to ethnonationalism. It has been of a secular, socialist-cum-communist variety with formal but restricted provisions for religious practice and cultural diversity. However, this is being challenged by a newer party, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, which promotes its own version of Hindutva ideology – “One Country, One State, One Legislature, One Executive”



– building on royalist sentiment in the country, which remains after Nepal became a republic in 2008.

Nepalese Royal family developing and maintaining contact with the Hindutva movement. From 1963 onwards, the RSS buttressed Nepalese royal claims as World Hindu emperors (Vishwa Hindu Samrats) and established the Vishwa Hindu Mahasangh, among the largest Hindu organisations globally, as well as a branch of its overseas arm in Nepal, the HSS. Some political figures, like former Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, combine Marxist-Leninist rhetoric with Hindutva slogans, reflecting contradictions in their ideologies. Hindutva ideology is being pushed at a popular level. There is an attempt to impose more stringently a pre-existing ban on beef and cow slaughter that clashes with the diversity of Nepal's population, which includes Dalits, Janajatis, Muslims, Christians, and other groups. The month of Poush in Nepal has become a platform for jingoistic and Hindutva-tinged nationalism, with events celebrating past kings and historical victories. However, these celebrations often overlook the less favourable aspects of the country's history. However, given Hindutva's dominance today, Nepalese nationalists are increasingly aware of the dangers of being swallowed up by the Hindutva ambition for a greater India, and so, while affirming their Hindu identity, resist assimilation by insisting on Nepal's independence, for instance, in 2023, the Mayor of Kathmandu banned a Bollywood film that claimed Sita's mythological origins lay in India and not in Nepal, as the Nepalese believe.<sup>40</sup>

## 5.10. SRI LANKA: BUDDHIST NATIONALISM AS HINDUTVA'S COMPETITOR

Hinduism is recognised along with three other religions, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, the latter having the “foremost place” constitutionally, with 70% of the population being Theravada Buddhists. Hindus form the largest religious minority at 12.6%. There is a separate ministry responsible for the oversight of Theravada Buddhism. Other religions do not enjoy the same constitutional protections that Buddhism does according to a 2003 judicial ruling; in 2017, the propagation of faith was also ruled as being unprotected. The overarching context for a resurgent Buddhist Sinhalese nationalism in Sri Lanka was the civil war between 1983–2009, the conflict being ethnic rather than religious, which saw victory over Tamil separatists in the North, largely Hindu and Christian by religion, by the Sinhalese Buddhist majority based in the centre and south of the country. Muslims are classed as a separate religio-ethnic group, as neither Tamil nor Sinhalese, although in reality, they are a complex multi-ethnic group shaped by centuries of complex migration through the Indian Oceanic world. In many ways, Buddhist nationalism in power in Sri Lanka is an analogue of and mirror for Hindutva in power in India.

- Since 2012, the Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Force, BBS) with government backing at times, has fostered Islamophobia. It has links with Myanmar's 696 Movement, tied to the genocide of the Rohingya Muslims, but has ambiguous relations with Hindutva.

This Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist group acknowledges historic links to India as the birthplace of Buddhism but resents India's support of Tamil separatists during the civil war. The BBS campaigns against halal meat and Muslima religious dress. It leads or influences anti-Muslim violence in Sri Lanka, and targets Muslim businesses with boycotts.

- The 2019 Easter Sunday attacks that killed about 260 people (the perpetrators were identified as Muslims) has exacerbated Islamophobia in the country. It has created a rare element of constructive interaction between the competing Sinhalese and Tamil elites.
- Buddhist heritage sites have been identified with religious sites traditionally associated with the country's Muslim and Hindu communities with the connivance of the authorities, e.g. the construction of a stupa at Kurunthoormalai on the ruins of the Athi Ayyanar Hindu temple.
- In the post-civil war Tamil north, there is some low-level Hindutva influence in Sri Lanka. A recent campaign in Jaffna targeted Christians and Muslims for attempting to proselytise Hindus.<sup>41</sup>

After 9/11, Indonesia has been actively promoting its version of "moderate Islam" known as Islam Nusantara, with efforts led by the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) and its youth wing, GP Ansor. The campaign aims to counter radicalism and encourage the embrace of moderate Islamic values. For his own rhetorical purposes, Ram Madhav from India's BJP has supported Indonesia's promotion of "moderate Islam" to justify illiberal policies against Indian Muslims and other minorities. He has engaged with NU leaders to cement his support for R20, a religious version of the G20 hosted by Indonesia. Madhav used NU's opposition to the caliphate to demand Indian Muslims abandon three key Islamic concepts of kufr, ummah and jihad, buttressing Hindutva themes about Islamic invasion of India. However, despite the NU's effort to spread the Indonesian model of Islam globally, caution is needed to avoid inadvertently strengthening Islamophobia in India and other countries like Hungary.<sup>42</sup> Derogatory remarks about the Prophet made by BJP officials have met with diplomatic backlash at an intergovernmental level rather than through any popular protests in Indonesia.

## 5.11. INDONESIA: THE NAIVE PROMOTION OF MODERATE ISLAM

With an ancient Hindu population, amounting to some 3% of Indonesia's enormous overall demography (with the world's largest Muslim population), which is practised not only by those of Indian heritage but adopted by Indigenous populations, e.g. in Bali, there is no strongly discernible move towards Hindutva among the country's Hindus.







# 6.0. BUILDING AN ANTI-HINDUTVA COALITION

## 6.1. BUILDING AN ANTI-HINDUTVA COALITION IN THE DIASPORA: THE EXAMPLE OF THE US

The anti-Hindutva movement in America has indeed faced challenges and divisions within its ranks, but it has also made efforts to build internal solidarity. Here are some examples with names and dates illustrating how the movement has worked to overcome divisions and foster unity:

### 6.1.1. INTERSECTIONAL AWARENESS

The Ambedkar King Study Circle, founded in 2015, has played a crucial role in building internal solidarity within the movement. They emphasize the intersectionality of various forms of oppression, connecting caste discrimination with racial oppression. AKSC's ideology of unity among the oppressed has resonated with many, contributing to a sense of solidarity within the movement.

### 6.1.2. JOINT SOLIDARITY STATEMENTS

Various organizations within the anti-Hindutva movement have issued joint solidarity statements on critical issues. For example, multiple organizations, including AKSC and Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR), co-sponsored a screening of the BBC's "The Modi Question" in San Jose in March 2023. This joint effort highlighted their commitment to working together against Hindutva.

### 6.1.3. SUPPORT FOR OTHER SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS

The movement has actively supported other social justice struggles in America, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. AKSC, for instance, condemned the killing of George Floyd in June 2020, drawing parallels between the struggles against caste oppression and racial oppression.

### 6.1.4. EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

To foster unity and understanding among different communities, many organizations have undertaken educational outreach efforts. For instance, the Indian American Muslim Congress (IAMC) faced challenges explaining the significance of certain symbols to other community organizations, which indicates their commitment to educating the broader public about Hindutva politics.

### 6.1.5. BROADENING SCOPE

Some organizations, like Hindus for Human Rights, have expanded their focus to address issues beyond Hindutva, such as anti-Muslim hate, anti-Christian hate, and anti-Tamil sentiments in South Asian communities. This broadening of scope indicates a willingness to address a wider range of issues affecting minority communities.

### 6.1.6. INVOLVEMENT OF PROGRESSIVE NON-SOUTH ASIAN ORGANIZATIONS

Progressive non-South Asian organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP), have endorsed and supported the anti-Hindutva movement. Their involvement demonstrates a broader solidarity with the movement's goals.<sup>43</sup>

### 6.2.2. LEGAL ACTION AND ADVOCACY

Initiating legal actions, including filing lawsuits and advocating for policy changes to counter Hindutva-related discrimination or hate speech. Success came in Seattle, which resulted in the passing of an ordinance in February 2023, making it the first authority outside of South Asia to pass a law explicitly banning caste discrimination. This landmark ordinance was seen as a significant victory for the anti-caste movement in the U.S. and highlighted the growing awareness of caste-based discrimination within diaspora communities. Advocacy efforts included Seattle city council member Kshama Sawant's introduction of legislation, public comments, and coordinated support from anti-caste organizations.

The Seattle Ordinance was also the outcome of building alliances with social justice movements to accept Hindutva-related discrimination and violence as a cause. Statements of solidarity and public comments were made during the Seattle city council meetings in February 2023, where over a hundred people expressed support for the ordinance banning caste discrimination. Organizations like Ambedkar King Study Circle, Equality Labs, and the Coalition of Seattle Indian Americans played a crucial role in coordinating these efforts.

Following Seattle's lead, California introduced State Senate Bill SB403 in April 2023, aimed at banning caste-based discrimination. While it is still in the legislative process, its introduction reflects the broader impact of the anti-caste movement and the willingness of lawmakers to address this issue at the state level.

## 6.2. THE TOOLKIT OF SUCCESSFUL ANTI-HINDUTVA STRATEGIES IN DIASPORA: THE US CASE STUDY

### 6.2.1. PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Organizing protests and demonstrations to raise awareness about Hindutva-related issues and condemn actions such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and religious violence in India. The nationwide protests against the CAA in December 2019 and January 2020, including the "CAA-NRC Protest" in Boston on 15 December 2019, and the "CAA-NRC Protest" in San Francisco on 20 December 2019. These protests involved thousands of participants.

### 6.2.2. EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS

Conducting educational campaigns to inform the public about the implications of Hindutva ideology and its impact on India's religious and cultural diversity. The "Desh Videsh Series" is organized by Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR). This series aims to engage both Hindutva supporters and progressive Hindus in open dialogues, providing a platform for constructive discussions.

### 6.2.4. REACTIVE MEDIA AND INFORMATION SHARING

Utilizing various media platforms to share information, raise awareness, and counter Hindutva narratives.

For example, the Edison bulldozer incident (August 2021), in which a controversial float depicting the demolition of a mosque appeared in a local parade, sparked outrage and led to discussions about the promotion of Hindutva ideology in the U.S. This incident brought to light the need to address hate speech and extremism in diaspora communities.

Various activists and organizations, including members of the Muslim and South Asian communities, voiced their concerns and called for accountability. The incident prompted discussions on the role of extremist ideologies within the Indian American diaspora.

### 6.2.5. DEDICATED RESOURCES TO MONITOR HINDUTVA IN INDIA AND GLOBAL HINDUTVA

The Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC), established in 2003, has produced regular investigative reports on Hindutva violence, discrimination and hatred against minorities in India since at least 2007, judging by the archive on its website. This monitoring function has now been regularised into quarterly reports that are then compiled analytically into annual reports, which are normally released in the first quarter. The reports are among the leading resources now produced by the anti-Hindutva movement globally. They are comprehensive in their scope, covering state and non-state violence, hatred and discrimination in political, social, economic, religious and cultural spheres, covering some one hundred pages.

## 6.3. ANOTHER POLITICS IS POSSIBLE FOR INDIA: REFLECTIONS ON THE SHAHEEN BAGH PROTESTS IN DELHI OF 2019-20

The anti-CAA protests at Shaheen Bagh offer several valuable lessons in opposing Hindutva, as they have been among the most effective, innovative and largest protests against this ruling ideology.

### 6.3.1. NOT BOUND BY CONSTITUTIONAL POLITICS OR PARTY POLITICS

They were not merely a struggle for constitutional values; they represented a broader movement for inclusion and the expansion of India as a nation-state. Shaheen Bagh challenged the existing party politics in India. It symbolized a new politics, distinct from the traditional, binary politics of Congress versus BJP-RSS. It questioned the status quo and offered an alternative to the prevailing, uninspiring politics.

### 6.3.2. CRITIQUE OF ETHNIC NATIONALISM AND CORPORATIZED DEMOCRACY

The Shaheen Bagh protests were a powerful critique of ethnic nationalism and corporate democracy. They emphasized the importance of solidarity, coalition building, and the limitations of nationalism driven by jingoism and hate.

### 6.3.3. CALL FOR INTERFAITH UNITY BEYOND THE LIMITATIONS OF LIBERALISM

The poetry of the anti-CAA movement promoted togetherness and unity among people of all faiths. It aimed to break down barriers erected in the name of hyper-nationalism and highlighted the senselessness of divisive nationalism.



The protests demonstrated that liberal voices need to avoid demonizing targeted communities and instead support their assertion. It called for a more nuanced understanding of communities facing discrimination and oppression.

### **6.3.4. UNPLANNED AND SPONTANEOUS POLITICAL ACTION**

The Shaheen Bagh protests were unplanned and unexpected, making them all the more significant. No one could have foreseen the scale, magnitude, and intensity of the movement. Time magazine reported that figures at Shaheen Bagh reached 150,000. It inspired major peaceful protests across India led by women, often joined by students and others, for example in Kolkata, Pune, Patna, Allahabad and many other cities. It surpassed any previous mobilization by Muslims in India since Partition, highlighting its unprecedented nature.

### **6.3.5. NEW LEADERS – WOMEN AND YOUTH**

Women played a pivotal role in the protests, not merely as spectators but as powerful leaders of marginalized communities. This leadership was exemplified by individuals like Bilkis Dadi, an 81-year-old woman with no formal education, who emerged as a symbol of the movement. Women's active participation challenged traditional gender roles and norms.

The protests saw the emergence of a new generation of youth leaders who defied traditional political categorizations. These young leaders brought with them a fresh and potent vocabulary that defied neat classifications, transcending the usual distinctions between “traditionalist” and “modernist”, “conservative” and “progressive”, and other conventional labels.

### **6.3.6. DEFIANCE OF ESTABLISHED LEADERS AND ERADICATION OF HIERARCHIES**

Unlike the established political leaders with affiliations to corrupt politicians or power brokers, these emerging leaders gained prominence despite, and sometimes in defiance of, the traditional leadership. They were not part of established political families and represented a self-generated leadership.

The protests dissolved the conventional hierarchies between leaders and followers or performers and spectators. The distinction between leaders and those led became blurred, with everyone assuming both roles simultaneously. This eradication of hierarchies reflected the grassroots and inclusive nature of the movement.<sup>44</sup>

# 7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNTER GLOBAL HINDUTVA



Hindu Voices for Justice, a global activist network led from the US, highlights the principled opposition of Hindus to Hindutva.

# 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNTER GLOBAL HINDUTVA

## 7.1. RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNTER GLOBAL HINDUTVA OUTSIDE INDIA

### 7.1.1. EDUCATION AND UNDERSTANDING

Hindutva, its ideology, and the threat it poses to Muslims in India and across the globe is still little understood by Muslims or wider civil society and government agencies across the world. Those who have the understanding need to ensure that they educate others including governments and their agencies about Hindutva and its potential to radicalise Hindu communities into hatred of Islam and Muslims. This must include educating those tasked with law and order and fostering good community relations about the radicalising activities of branches of Hindutva-linked institutions outside India.

### 7.1.2. COUNTERING HINDUTVA PROPAGANDA NARRATIVES AND TROPES

Hindutva ideology and anti-Muslim propaganda are disseminated not only by its institutions but through social media in the form of mass trolling and also by Indian satellite channels, Bollywood, and online news outlets. There needs to be an organised effort to counter such narratives and tropes. This should include challenging and contesting Hindutva revisionist Muslim history including around historic mosques and Sufi shrines earmarked for demolition.

### 7.1.3. MUSLIM STATES TO COUNTER HINDUTVA

Muslim states, especially those in the Arabian Gulf that employ large numbers of expatriate Indian workers, must ensure that they curb Hindutva ideology in their countries and act where individuals are found to be linked to Hindutva or promote hate against Muslims and Christians. Muslim state media and independent media have a significant role to play in countering Hindutva propaganda and educating the public about it.

### 7.1.4. ORGANISED MONITORING OF HINDUTVA LINKED VIOLENCE AND HATE CRIMES

Muslim organisations and scholars should prioritise countering the spread of Hindutva ideology. Muslim community organisations should develop the capacity to log, report, and maintain records of Hindutva-linked glorification of violence, genocide, and hate crimes. Annual reports of such activities should be maintained. Monitoring should include non-Hindu think tanks and right-wing or Zionist groups cooperating with Hindutva activists against Muslims. This is in addition to encouraging international human rights organisations and UN agencies to monitor and report on this phenomenon.

Crucially, anti-Hindutva organisations and activists outside India should provide technical support to rights groups so that their findings can be hosted safely and

securely online outside of India, as there is ample evidence that such monitoring websites are disabled within India itself, as part of a coordinated attempt to obscure growing violence, harassment, hatred and discrimination.

### **7.1.5. STRENGTHEN MULTILATERAL COOPERATION**

Encourage international cooperation among civil society organizations and academia to monitor and counter the global spread of Hindutva ideology, and also with governments where that is a viable option. Establish a coordinated effort to share information, best practices, and strategies to address the challenge collectively.

### **7.1.6. PROMOTE INCLUSIVE NARRATIVES**

Support initiatives that challenge Hindutva's exclusionary narratives. Encourage storytelling and educational programs that emphasize the diversity and pluralism of Indian society, including voices from marginalized communities. Amplify positive portrayals of India's rich and complex cultural history and heritage. There should be an emphasis on Islamic civilization and its contribution to India.

### **7.1.7. ADVOCATE FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS**

Engage with governments and international organizations to advocate for the protection of religious freedom and minority rights in India. Highlight cases of discrimination and violence against religious minorities and call for accountability and justice.

### **7.1.8. COMBAT ONLINE DISINFORMATION**

Collaborate with social media platforms and tech companies to address the spread of hate speech and disinformation related

to Hindutva. Develop and promote digital literacy programs to help users discern credible information from propaganda.

### **7.1.9. SUPPORT DIASPORA INITIATIVES**

Encourage diaspora communities to engage in dialogue and bridge-building efforts with other minority groups affected by Hindutva. Facilitate cultural exchanges and interfaith dialogues to foster understanding and unity.

### **7.1.10. EXPAND MONITORING AND ANALYSIS CAPACITY**

Fund and develop new dedicated monitoring capacities to look further into how Global Hindutva is interconnected as well as directed from India. Particular attention should be given to financial and philanthropic linkages.

## **7.2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THOSE OUTSIDE INDIA TO COUNTER HINDUTVA WITHIN INDIA**

### **7.2.1. ENCOURAGE SELF-DEFENCE AND SECURITY TRAINING AMONG MUSLIMS IN INDIA**

Muslims in India have already suffered pogroms such as in Gujarat where they were unable to defend themselves. Women were slaughtered in their own homes. With a genocide in the making in India, Muslims there should be encouraged to learn how to defend themselves and their communities in a coordinated and professional manner to reduce inevitable deaths from lynchings, state-encouraged vigilantism and pogroms when they have no other legal recourse or protection from the state.

### **7.2.2. ENCOURAGE MUSLIM ORGANISATIONS BUSINESS, CULTURAL, AND RELIGIOUS TO NETWORK WITH THOSE OUTSIDE INDIA.**

There is still extraordinarily little knowledge of the exceedingly challenging situation that Muslims in India face, even among their diasporic organisations and networks in the wider Muslim world. Linkages and networks inside and outside India need to be strengthened and expanded.

### **7.2.3. DO NOT NEGLECT JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

Jammu and Kashmir has been annexed by India and is now fully occupied and effectively part of India. Kashmir has had a long, first-hand experience of the brutality of Hindutva. Yet Kashmir is a neglected cause both inside and outside India. Any viable strategy against Hindutva must highlight what is happening inside Kashmir, and consider carefully what it means for Hindutva's expansionist ambitions for a Greater Bharat, and the forms of escalating violence against Muslims and other persecuted minorities within the rest of India.

### **7.2.4. AMPLIFY LOCAL VOICES**

Partner with Indian civil society organizations, activists, and journalists who are working tirelessly to counter Hindutva within the country, often under intense pressure, intimidation and violence. Amplify their voices and stories, providing them with a global platform to raise awareness about the situation on the ground. From the diaspora, provide philanthropic, legal and political support when they are persecuted and highlight such cases globally.

### **7.2.5. PRESSURE FOR ACCOUNTABILITY**

Engage with governments and international bodies to pressure the Indian government to uphold the rule of law and protect the rights of all citizens, regardless of their religious or social background. Advocate for transparent investigations into human rights abuses and support mechanisms for accountability.

### **7.2.6. FOSTER INTERCOMMUNITY HARMONY**

Support initiatives that encourage harmony and understanding between different religious and ethnic communities within India. Promote interfaith events, cultural exchanges, and educational programs that break down barriers and promote greater amity.

### **7.2.7. DOCUMENT AND SHARE INFORMATION**

Collaborate with human rights organizations and independent investigators to document cases of discrimination, violence, and hate crimes linked to Hindutva. Share this information with international media outlets, policymakers, and the public to raise awareness and generate international pressure for change.

### **7.2.8. ADVOCATE FOR LEGAL REFORMS**

Advocate for legal reforms in India to protect the rights of minorities and uphold the principles of secularism enshrined in the Indian constitution. Support campaigns for the repeal of discriminatory laws and the enactment of legislation that ensures equal rights for all citizens. These urgent legal reforms do not obviate a deeper discussion about the shortcomings and



continuities between post-independence Congress politics and the rise of Hindutva majoritarianism in 2014 to imagine a new India not confined solely to politics as constitutionalism.

### **7.2.9. PROMOTE ACADEMIC AND POLICY EXPERT EXCHANGE**

Encourage academic institutions and think tanks to engage in research and dialogue on the impact of Hindutva ideology within India. Where possible, foster partnerships between international and Indian universities to promote rigorous analysis and informed debate on the issue.

### **7.2.10. PUT INDIA'S INCIPIENT GENOCIDE ON THE GLOBAL AGENDA**

Indian Muslims by some estimates constitute the second largest Muslim population in the world. While Hindutva is a century-old movement, the Global War on Terror has elevated two ideas around the world that make the genocide of India's Muslims more rather than less likely: the first is that Muslim political agency is a threat and the second is that Muslim lives are cheap. A further wave of radicalisation has taken place in the Hindutva movement since it came to power: the leaders who enabled state-back vigilantism against Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Dalits, Adivasis (tribal peoples of India), and other vulnerable groups are now rising rapidly through the political ranks of the BJP. Among their figureheads is the incendiary current Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath, who has presided over a reign of terror in India's most populous state,

although even he has had to rein in the vigilante groups he encouraged through the "love jihad" and "cow protection" campaigns. He extensively uses the language of violence, expulsion and extermination against India's Muslims and other minorities. If he represents the future of Hindutva politics in India then the tipping point between persecution and extermination in the stages of genocide may be reached.

The anti-Hindutva movement must succeed in overcoming the studious silence or minimization that the global and regional powers observe about India's Muslims and other vulnerable minorities, whether it is the Western nations or the Middle East looking for trade deals with India or engaging with it primarily as a counterbalance to China. Thus all efforts must be made to strengthen the anti-Hindutva movement in India and globally, and the connections between them.

In conclusion, countering the global spread of Hindutva requires a multi-pronged approach that combines international cooperation, advocacy, dialogue, and support for those working within India to protect its diverse and pluralistic heritage. By taking these practical action points, a global anti-Hindutva movement can contribute to the preservation of religious and cultural diversity in India and the promotion of tolerance and inclusion worldwide, and most importantly work to prevent what could potentially be one of the largest genocides in modern history.

## ENDNOTES

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# 8. RESOURCES

# 8.0 RESOURCES

## 8.1 KEY ORGANISATIONS AND WEBSITES

### **Ambedkar King Study Circle (AKSC), est. 2016**

(<https://akscusa.org/>)

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Established by Indian Americans in the Bay Area, California, draws inspiration from the legacies of B.R. Ambedkar in India and Martin Luther King Jr. in the United States. The organization aims to challenge caste, class, race, gender, and religious oppressions on ideological, political, and social fronts. It opposes the caste system and Hindutva politics, emphasizing progressive and leftist politics. AKSC organizes reading circles, discussions, and events, contributing to the theorization of caste oppression in the United States.

### **Amnesty International: India, est. 1961**

(<https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-asia/india/>)

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One of the premier international human rights organisations in the world, Amnesty International has a section office in Karnataka and runs a wide range of campaigns and research on India.

### **Freedom House: India, est. 1941**

(<https://freedomhouse.org/country/india>)

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A leading American think tank focused on democracy and civil liberties. Its annual report based on its comprehensive Freedom House Index of political and civil rights is seen as authoritative.

### **Hindu Nationalism:**

#### **A Roundup of Reporting and Sources**

(<https://www.religionlink.com/source-guides/hindu-nationalism-a-roundup-of-reporting-and-resources/>)

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An invaluable and regularly updated resource on Hindutva in India, in America, with a list of key news reports and books, and a comprehensive list of experts and organisations.

### **Hindus for Human Rights (HfHR), est. 2019**

(<https://www.hindusforhumanrights.org/>)

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A faith-based, progressive advocacy organization founded by Indian Americans in response to the growing influence of Hindutva in India and the United States. The organization explicitly rejects Hindutva and emphasizes values such as peace, justice, and truth. HfHR engages in policy advocacy, congressional briefings, podcast series, and video projects to counter Hindutva propaganda. They also initiate conversations within the Indian American community on various issues, including the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and caste discrimination.

### **Hindutva Harassment Field Manual by South**

#### **Asia Scholar Activist Collective, est. 2021**

(<https://www.hindutvaharassmentfieldmanual.org/>)

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This is an excellent practical guide to prepare for the mass trolling that the highly directed and motivated Hindutva accounts online (real and automated) engage in actively against the movement's critics. It is essential preparatory reading for anyone taking a public stand against Hindutva.

**Hindutva Watch (HW), est. 2021**

(<https://hindutvawatch.org/>)

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Hindutva Watch is an independent research initiative that documents hate crimes and hate speech against minorities in India, although it also monitors global Hindutva. Founded by journalist Raqib Hameed Naik, the project collects and verifies video footage, photographs, and evidence related to violent attacks, hate speech incidents, and human rights transgressions in real-time. In 2021, Hindutva Watch's Twitter account faced suspension upon the request of the Indian government but was subsequently reinstated.

**Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC), est. 2002** (<https://iamc.com/>)

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A non-profit organization representing Indian American Muslims. Their mission is to advocate for peace, pluralism, and social justice. IAMC addresses Islamophobia in the United States and anti-Muslim sentiments in India. They have a diverse membership across age groups and demographics. IAMC publishes reports on Hindutva violence in India and advocates for liberal values like peace, justice, and pluralism. They engage in policy work, congressional briefings, and video news series to highlight Hindutva-related issues both in India and the United States.

**Justice and Empowerment of Minorities, est. 2021** (<https://www.jem.org.in/index.html>)

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JEM, an initiative by Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, protects minority rights and counters hate speech. It collects cases of harassment against minorities, promotes equal rights, justice, and peace, and empowers marginalized communities. JEM publishes regular reviews in English and Urdu on hate crimes and aims to provide judicial assistance to victims while strengthening constitutional guarantees for minority rights in India.

**Maktoob, est. 2014**

(<https://maktoobmedia.com/>)

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An independent Indian media outlet established in Delhi in 2014 that is nationally recognized and continues to amplify the voices of the oppressed and the marginalized in India, including Muslims, Dalits, Adivasis, women, and other minorities. It also produces documentaries for its own YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/@Maktoobmedia>).

**South Asian Solidarity Group (SASG), est. 1987** (<https://southasiasolidarity.org/>)

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A progressive, anti-imperialist, anti-racist organization based in Britain. It is committed to supporting, publicising, and building solidarity with people's struggles for justice and democracy and against exploitation, gender and caste-based oppression, imperialism, war and the so-called 'war on terror' in the countries of South Asia. It has run dedicated campaigns incorporating protest, alliance building in Britain and South Asia, research and analysis on caste discrimination, the BJP, the Gujarat Pogrom, Kashmir, and on corporate malfeasance in India, e.g. by the Vedanta mining company.

**UK Indian Muslim Council, est. 2023**

(<https://www.ukimc.org/>)

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It is a representational council formed of Indian Muslim diasporic organisations in the UK and is affiliated with the Indian-American Muslim Council. It seeks to build the political capacity of UK Indian Muslims, and, in promoting interfaith harmony and tolerance, one of its central goals is to counter Hindutva in the UK and India through a programme of public education, research, campaigning and lobbying.

**United States Commission on International Religious Freedom: India (USCIRF), est. 1998**

(<https://www.uscirf.gov/countries/india>)

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The USCIRF, established in 1998 under the International Religious Freedom Act, is a non-partisan U.S. federal agency. It oversees global religious freedom, offers policy advice to the President and Congress, and ensures the implementation of these recommendations. It produces a comprehensive annual global report on religious freedoms worldwide, except in the United States.



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## APPENDIX ONE: TIMELINE OF LEICESTER UNREST AND AFTERMATH, 2022-3

Date	Information	Source
22/05/2022	A 19 year old Muslim was hospitalised after being beaten up by a gang of 30 youths, wielding poles and bats. He was attacked after being asked about his name and religion; a video was later circulated on social media.	BBC News, "Did Misinformation Fan the Flames in Leicester?", 25 September 2022; "Hindutva Fascists March on Leicester." Socialist Appeal, 21 September 2022.
28/08/2022	Racial chants made after India-Pakistan cricket match by Hindu youth in the Belgrave area, chanting Hindutva slogan, videos circulated on social media.	BBC News, "Arrest after Crowds Gather in Leicester Following Cricket Match." 31 August 2022.
31/08/2022	Man arrested for assault at post-cricket match disorder.	BBC News, "Arrest after Crowds Gather in Leicester Following Cricket Match." 31 August 2022.
06/09/2022	Emergency meeting held between faith leaders after circulation of videos and reports online.	Leicester Mercury, "Emergency Meeting", 5 September 2022.
Mid-Sept 2022	A group attacked a Sikh man, footage was widely shared. A traffic warden in Belgrave had a knife pulled on him and asked if he was Muslim. Saying yes, he was attacked and footage was caught on his webcam. A 17 year old Muslim teenager was asked about his religion on Cottesmore Rd but managed to escape after being nearly attacked.	"Hindutva Fascists March on Leicester." Socialist Appeal, 21 September 2022.
16/09/2022	Police make 27 arrests for public disorder for incidents stretching back to 28 Aug.	BBC News, "Large-Scale Disorder Breaks out in Leicester." 16 September 2022.
17/09/2022	A large-scale disorder involving hundreds of Hindu and Muslim youths after 2-300 Hindu youth, mostly masked and some armed, marched from Loughborough Rd in Belgrave to Green Lane Rd in North Evington, escorted by a few police officers, making Hindutva chant, "Victory to Lord Ram". Faith leaders call for calm.	BBC News, "Large-Scale Disorder Breaks out in Leicester," 18 September 2022; "Hindutva Fascists March on Leicester." Socialist Appeal, 21 September 2022.
19/09/2022	15 more arrests made.	BBC News, "Fifteen Arrested in Leicester Disorder Operation." 19 September 2022.

19/09/2022	Indian High Commission condemns “the violence perpetrated against the Indian community in Leicester, and vandalism of premises and symbols of Hindu religion” after a video circulated of a Muslim youth pulling down a flag from a temple in Belgrave. An imam stood with Dharmesh Lakhani who works with Hindu temples across the city to protect the Belgrave site.	“Half of Those Arrested over Clashes in Leicester from Outside County.” Guardian 19 September 2022.
21/09/2022	Protest of 100 Muslim youth outside Smethwick temple for inviting controversial Hindutva speaker; one arrest made.	ITV News, “Leicester Muslim-Hindu Tensions Spread to Smethwick as Arrest Made Outside Temple.” 21 September 2022.
22/09/2022	Five more arrests made.	BBC News, 22 September 2022.
24/09/2022	Muslim and Hindu women leaders come together to call for peace; those arrested were mostly from Leicester and Birmingham, with some from London and Market Harborough.	BBC News, 24 September 2022.
30/09/2022	Eight more arrests were made.	BBC News, “Leicester Disorder: Police Make Eight More Arrests.” 30 September 2022.
11/10/2022	Six more arrests were made.	BBC News, “Leicester Disorder: Police Announce Six Further Arrests.” 11 October 2022.
26/10/2022	Independent review announced by Leicester’s mayor to be led by academic Chris Allen	BBC News, “Leicester Disorder: Independent Review Announced by City Council.” 26 October 2022.
29/10/2022	Council of Hindu and Jain Temples in Leicester announces boycott of review, says reviewer is biased	BBC News, “Leicester Disorder: Hindu Groups Set to Boycott Review.” 29 October 2022.
01/11/2022	Reviewer steps down after elevated levels of online abuse	BBC News, “Leicester Disorder: Expert Dr Chris Allen Steps down from Review.” 1 November 2022.
26/05/2023	Lord Austin, an independent peer and former Labour MP, appointed by government to lead the enquiry	BBC News, “Leicester Disorder: Leader of Review into 2022 Unrest Criticised.” 1 June 2023.
01/06/2023	Appointment of Lord Austin criticized by Muslim groups as biased, led by the Muslim Council of Britain, the Federation of Muslim Organisations, the City Mayor, and eight city councillors	BBC News, “Leicester Disorder: Leader of Review into 2022 Unrest Criticised.” 1 June 2023.



Pran Pratishtha inauguration ceremony of Shree Ram Janmaboomi Temple in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh, 22 January 2024, built on the site of the demolished Babri Mosque/Wikimedia Commons; Front cover image: Demolition of the Babri Mosque, 1992 (poster)/Wikimedia Commons



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