

# IDEOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION IN INDIAN FOREIGN POLICY UNDER NARENDRA MODI: AN ANALYSIS OF HINDUTVA IDEOLOGY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

Jamal Ud Din<sup>\*1</sup>, Iftikhar Ali<sup>2</sup>, Zakirullah<sup>3</sup>, Ibad Jamil<sup>4</sup>,

<sup>\*1</sup>Lecturer in Political Science, Department of Political Science, Govt College Daggar, Buner

<sup>2,3,4</sup>BS Graduates, Department of Political Science, Govt College Daggar, Buner

<sup>\*1</sup>jamal.phdps53@iiu.edu.pk, <sup>2</sup>iftikharali2762@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>zakirsangara@gmail.com

<sup>4</sup>ibadjamil48@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20570596>

## Keywords

Hindutva, Indian foreign policy, Narendra Modi, BJP, Pakistan, South Asia, Hindu nationalism, constructivism.

## Article History

Received: 09 April 2026

Accepted: 21 May 2026

Published: 06 June 2026

Copyright @Author

Corresponding Author: \*

Jamal Ud Din

## Abstract

This research paper examines the ideological transformation of Indian foreign policy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with a specific focus on the role of Hindutva ideology in shaping India's strategic posture toward Pakistan. Since Modi's rise to power in 2014 and his subsequent re-election in 2019 and 2024, Indian foreign policy has undergone a significant shift from its historically secular, non-aligned foundations toward a more assertive, Hindu nationalist framework. The paper argues that Hindutva ideology rooted in the concept of Hindu cultural nationalism advanced by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and reflected in the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) political agenda has increasingly permeated India's foreign policy discourse and decision-making. Drawing on constructivist international relations theory, this paper analyzes how national identity, ideological framing, and domestic political imperatives under the BJP government have redefined India's bilateral relationship with Pakistan. Key policy decisions examined include the surgical strikes of 2016, the Balakot air strikes of 2019, the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir, and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), all of which carry significant implications for regional stability and Indo-Pakistani relations. The paper concludes that the infusion of Hindutva ideology into foreign policy represents a structural departure from the Nehruvian tradition and poses enduring challenges to peace, diplomacy, and conflict resolution in South Asia.

## INTRODUCTION

The election of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister of India in May 2014 marked a watershed moment in the country's political and foreign policy history. For the first time since independence, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) deeply rooted in the ideology of Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism won an outright parliamentary majority without the need for coalition partners. This political transformation was not merely electoral; it

signaled a broader ideological reorientation of the Indian state, with profound implications for how India defines itself, interacts with its neighbors, and navigates the complex terrain of South Asian geopolitics (Jaffrelot, 2015).

Hindutva, as a political ideology, posits that India's identity is fundamentally Hindu in character, and that the state should reflect and protect this identity. While the ideology has deep historical

roots in the writings of V.D. Savarkar and the organizational philosophy of the RSS, its transition into the mainstream of Indian governance under Modi represents a qualitative shift in the relationship between domestic ideology and foreign policy behavior (Golwalkar, 1966; Savarkar, 1923). Unlike the secular, pluralist, and non-aligned orientation of the Nehruvian era, the BJP's foreign policy vision is infused with a Hindu nationalist imaginary that reshapes India's adversarial relationship with Pakistan—a country that, in the Hindutva worldview, represents both a civilizational threat and a symbol of the failed promise of partition (Puri, 2016).

The India-Pakistan relationship has historically been one of the most volatile bilateral relationships in the world, shaped by territorial disputes, cross-border terrorism, nuclear deterrence, and the unresolved Kashmir conflict. However, under Modi's government, the tenor and substance of this relationship have changed in ways that reflect ideological imperatives rather than purely strategic calculations (Ganguly, 2016). From the surgical strikes following the Uri attack in 2016, to the unprecedented Balakot air strikes in 2019, to the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special constitutional status, the Modi government's approach to Pakistan has been characterized by a muscular assertiveness that resonates deeply with the Hindutva base while simultaneously escalating bilateral tensions (Cohen & Dasgupta, 2010; Rajagopalan, 2019).

This paper seeks to analyze the nexus between Hindutva ideology and Indian foreign policy under Modi, with a particular focus on its implications for Pakistan. The central research question is: To what extent has Hindutva ideology shaped India's foreign policy orientation toward Pakistan under the Modi government? The paper proceeds in five sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 provides a theoretical framework drawing on constructivist international relations theory. Section 3 traces the historical development of Hindutva and its emergence as a governing ideology. Section 4 analyzes specific foreign policy decisions and their ideological dimensions. Section 5 examines the implications

for Pakistan and regional stability. The paper concludes with a summary of findings and their broader significance for South Asian peace.

### **Theoretical Framework: Constructivism and Foreign Policy Identity**

Understanding the relationship between domestic ideology and foreign policy requires a theoretical lens that can account for the role of ideas, norms, and identity in shaping state behavior. Realist and liberal theories of international relations, while valuable, are insufficient to capture the ideational dimensions of foreign policy change. This paper, therefore, draws primarily on constructivist theory as developed by scholars such as Alexander Wendt (1999), Peter Katzenstein (1996), and Martha Finnemore (1996).

Constructivism argues that the identities and interests of states are not fixed or material but are socially constructed through intersubjective processes. In other words, how a state defines itself—its national identity—shapes what it considers to be in its national interest, how it perceives threats, and how it engages with other states (Wendt, 1999). From a constructivist perspective, the rise of Hindutva ideology represents a reconstruction of Indian national identity, one that has consequences for the country's foreign policy behavior, particularly in relation to its Muslim-majority neighbor, Pakistan. Katzenstein (1996) demonstrated that domestic norms and identity structures are central determinants of a state's security policy. In the Indian context, the normative shift from a secular-pluralist identity to a Hindu nationalist identity has reconfigured the threat perception associated with Pakistan. Pakistan is no longer viewed merely as a geopolitical rival, but as a civilizational other—an Islamic state that, in the Hindutva worldview, embodies the antithesis of Hindu civilization (Puri, 2016). This construction of Pakistan as an ideological enemy, rather than merely a strategic adversary, elevates the emotional and symbolic stakes of bilateral relations and reduces the space for diplomatic compromise.

Furthermore, constructivism's emphasis on the role of domestic political actors in shaping state identity is particularly relevant to the Modi era.

The BJP and its affiliated organizations—collectively known as the Sangh Parivar—have been active in constructing a narrative of Indian national identity that places Hindu culture, history, and values at the center of public life and state policy (Jaffrelot, 2021). This narrative construction does not stop at the water's edge; it permeates foreign policy discourse, shapes public opinion on national security, and constrains the range of diplomatic options available to Indian policymakers.

In applying this theoretical framework, the paper does not argue that ideology is the sole determinant of foreign policy. Material factors—military capabilities, economic interests, alliance structures—continue to matter. Rather, the argument is that ideology shapes how these material factors are interpreted and deployed. Hindutva ideology provides the lens through which the Modi government perceives threats from Pakistan, frames its responses to provocations, and communicates its policies to the domestic audience (Ganguly, 2016; Hall, 2015).

### **Hindutva: Historical Origins and Ideological Content**

#### **Origins of Hindutva Thought**

The term "Hindutva" was systematically articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar in his 1923 pamphlet, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* Savarkar defined Hindutva not as a religious concept but as a cultural and political identity encompassing all those who regard India as both their fatherland (pitribhumi) and their holy land (punyabhumi). Under this definition, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs could all claim a Hindutva identity, but Muslims and Christians—whose holy lands lie outside India—were excluded from the full membership of the Hindu nation (Savarkar, 1923). This formulation had profound implications for the treatment of religious minorities and for the relationship between India and neighboring Muslim-majority states.

M.S. Golwalkar, the second head of the RSS, further elaborated the ideological foundations of Hindutva in his influential 1939 work, *We, or Our Nationhood Defined*. Golwalkar drew on European racial nationalist theories and argued

that the Hindu nation must assimilate its minorities or face internal fragmentation (Golwalkar, 1966). While later RSS ideologues distanced themselves from some of Golwalkar's more extreme formulations, the core premise—that India is fundamentally a Hindu civilization and that the state must protect and promote this civilization—remained central to the Hindutva worldview.

The RSS, founded in 1925, was established as the organizational vehicle for Hindutva ideology. It built an extensive network of affiliated organizations—including the BJP, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), and the Bajrang Dal—collectively referred to as the Sangh Parivar (Jaffrelot, 1996). Through this network, Hindutva ideology was propagated through educational institutions, cultural programs, political mobilization, and social welfare activities, giving it a mass organizational base that has no parallel among Indian political ideologies

#### **From Opposition to Governance: The BJP's Rise**

The BJP was founded in 1980 as a successor to the Bharatiya Jana Sangh and positioned itself as the political wing of the Sangh Parivar. While the party had an earlier brief stint in power in 1996 and led a coalition government from 1998 to 2004 under Atal Bihari Vajpayee, its governance during that period was characterized by a degree of pragmatic moderation that tempered its Hindutva commitments (Vajpayee, 1999). Modi's 2014 victory, however, represented a qualitatively different phenomenon. Unlike Vajpayee, who was a moderate on Hindu nationalism, Modi came from the organizational core of the RSS and had built his political career on an explicitly Hindutva platform (Jaffrelot, 2015).

Modi's personal biography is deeply embedded in the RSS's organizational culture. He joined the RSS as a child pracharak (full-time volunteer) and rose through its ranks before transitioning to BJP politics in Gujarat, where he served as Chief Minister from 2001 to 2014 (Nilekani, 2009). His tenure as Gujarat Chief Minister was marked by the 2002 communal riots, in which over a thousand Muslims were killed, and for which Modi was widely criticized both domestically and

internationally. Although Indian courts ultimately declined to prosecute him, the events of 2002 became a defining episode in Modi's political identity and in the perception of his government by Muslim-majority countries, including Pakistan (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

Modi's electoral success in 2014, 2019, and 2024 reflects the consolidation of Hindutva as the dominant political force in India. The BJP's election manifestos have consistently emphasized themes of national security, cultural nationalism, and the assertion of Hindu identity in public life (BJP, 2014, 2019). These domestic ideological commitments have translated into specific foreign policy orientations, particularly in relation to Pakistan, which occupies a central place in the Hindutva political imagination as the primary symbol of Hindu-Muslim civilizational conflict.

### **Ideological Transformation in Indian Foreign Policy under Modi**

#### **From Nehruvian Non-Alignment to Assertive Nationalism**

Indian foreign policy in the post-independence era was shaped primarily by the vision of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. Nehru's foreign policy was characterized by three core principles: non-alignment, secularism, and a commitment to peaceful coexistence with neighbors. Non-alignment meant that India sought to remain independent of Cold War blocs, cultivating relationships with both the United States and the Soviet Union while resisting military alliances with either. Secularism meant that India's foreign policy would not be driven by religious identity, and that the country would maintain working relationships with Muslim-majority states in the region and beyond (Nehru, 1946). The Nehruvian approach to Pakistan, while acknowledging the deep hostility of the bilateral relationship, generally favored negotiated settlements and diplomatic engagement over coercive confrontation.

This tradition was maintained, with varying degrees of consistency, by successive Indian governments through the Congress-led administrations and even during the earlier BJP government under Vajpayee, who famously

extended a hand of friendship to Pakistan through the Lahore Declaration of 1999 (Vajpayee, 1999). The transformation under Modi has been marked by a departure from this tradition in both substance and style. Indian foreign policy under Modi has become more assertive, more willing to use military force, more inclined to frame bilateral disputes in civilizational terms, and more attentive to the domestic political dividends of a hardline stance toward Pakistan (Hall, 2015; Puri, 2016).

#### **The Surgical Strikes of 2016**

One of the most significant illustrations of the ideological transformation in Indian foreign policy was the Indian Army's surgical strikes across the Line of Control in September 2016, conducted in response to the terrorist attack on an Indian Army base in Uri, Jammu and Kashmir, which killed 18 soldiers. The strikes were presented by the Modi government as a decisive and unprecedented military response to Pakistani-sponsored actors, and they were publicly announced in a highly dramatic press conference by the Director General of Military Operations—a departure from India's traditional practice of maintaining ambiguity about cross-border military operations (Rajagopalan, 2019).

The decision to publicize the strikes, rather than simply conduct them covertly, reflected a political logic as much as a military one. By making the strikes public, the Modi government was able to project an image of decisive, muscular leadership to its domestic constituency, demonstrating that India would no longer absorb Pakistani provocations passively (Ganguly, 2016). This resonated powerfully with the Hindutva narrative of Hindu national pride and assertive response to perceived Islamic aggression. The strikes became a major electoral talking point for the BJP in subsequent state elections, illustrating the deep connection between foreign policy action and domestic ideological mobilization under the Modi government (Jaffrelot, 2021).

From Pakistan's perspective, the surgical strikes represented a dangerous escalation of military coercion below the nuclear threshold and a violation of its territorial sovereignty. The Pakistani military denied that the strikes had taken

place at all—a position that reflected its own domestic political constraints—while simultaneously reinforcing its own narrative of Indian aggression (Haqqani, 2005). The divergent narratives surrounding the strikes illustrate how ideology shapes not only the decision to use force but also the framing and communication of that force in ways that deepen mutual hostility.

### **The Balakot Air Strikes of 2019**

The Balakot air strikes of February 2019 represented a further escalation in India's willingness to use military force against Pakistan. Following the Pulwama attack of February 14, 2019—in which a suicide bomber killed 40 Central Reserve Police Force personnel in Jammu and Kashmir—the Indian Air Force conducted air strikes on what it claimed was a Jaish-e-Mohammed training camp in Balakot, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. For the first time since the 1971 war, India had conducted an air strike on Pakistani territory proper, crossing a significant threshold in the escalation ladder (Rajagopalan, 2019).

The timing of the Balakot strikes—just months before the 2019 general election—has been widely noted by analysts. The strikes enabled Modi to campaign on a nationalist platform of decisive military leadership, and the BJP's subsequent electoral landslide—with an even larger majority than in 2014—appeared to validate this political calculus (Jaffrelot, 2021). Critics, however, argued that the strikes' actual military effectiveness was questionable, and that their primary purpose was domestic political mobilization rather than strategic deterrence. This conflation of military action with electoral strategy is characteristic of how Hindutva ideology shapes foreign policy under Modi: the domestic ideological audience is as important, if not more important, than the strategic audience in Islamabad or Rawalpindi.

Pakistan's response to the Balakot strikes—which included shooting down an Indian aircraft and capturing the pilot, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman—demonstrated the risks of ideologically driven military escalation. The incident brought the two nuclear-armed states to the brink of a broader military confrontation

before de-escalation was achieved, in part through diplomatic intervention by the United States, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (Tellis, 2019). The Balakot crisis illustrated the dangerous intersection of Hindutva-driven assertiveness and nuclear deterrence in South Asia.

### **Abrogation of Article 370 and the Kashmir Dimension**

Perhaps the most constitutionally significant expression of Hindutva ideology in Indian foreign policy was the abrogation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution in August 2019, which had granted the state of Jammu and Kashmir a special autonomous status since 1949. The abrogation—accompanied by the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two centrally administered Union Territories—had long been a core demand of the RSS and the BJP, who viewed the special status as an illegitimate concession to Muslim-majority identity politics that undermined the integrity of the Hindu nation (BJP, 2019).

The abrogation of Article 370 had direct and profound implications for India-Pakistan relations. Pakistan immediately downgraded diplomatic relations with India, expelled the Indian High Commissioner, suspended bilateral trade, and took the matter to the United Nations Security Council (Malik, 2020). More broadly, the abrogation signaled India's intent to treat the Kashmir dispute as a fully settled domestic matter, foreclosing the possibility of any future bilateral negotiation on the issue's final status. From the Hindutva perspective, this was entirely consistent: the incorporation of Kashmir into the full administrative framework of the Indian Union was a long-sought civilizational vindication, a reassertion of Hindu nation's territorial integrity against the claims of Pakistani-backed separatism (Puri, 2016).

The humanitarian consequences of the abrogation—including the extended lockdown of Kashmir, the suspension of internet services, and the detention of political leaders—drew international criticism from human rights organizations and foreign governments (Human Rights Watch, 2019). However, the Modi

government's willingness to absorb this criticism reflected its confidence that the domestic ideological gains of the abrogation outweighed the diplomatic costs, and that its relationships with major powers—particularly the United States and Gulf states—were sufficiently robust to insulate it from serious consequences.

### **The Citizenship Amendment Act and Its Regional Implications**

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), passed by the Indian Parliament in December 2019, provided a fast-track path to Indian citizenship for persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan—but explicitly excluded Muslims from this provision. The CAA was widely criticized as discriminatory and as a departure from India's constitutional commitment to secularism (Bajpai, 2020). For Pakistan, the CAA represented confirmation of the BJP government's discriminatory stance toward Muslims, and it was used as evidence of Indian state-sponsored Islamophobia in diplomatic forums and international advocacy.

The CAA had significant implications for bilateral relations, as it implicitly characterized Pakistan as a state that persecutes religious minorities—a characterization that Pakistan rejected and which deepened mutual hostility. Moreover, the domestic protests against the CAA within India, and the government's forceful response to those protests, further polarized the political environment in ways that made diplomatic engagement with Pakistan more difficult (Jaffrelot, 2021). In an ideological climate in which any accommodation with Pakistan risks being framed as appeasement of Islamic interests, the space for pragmatic diplomacy has been severely constrained.

### **Implications for Pakistan and Regional Stability Strategic and Security Implications**

The ideological transformation of Indian foreign policy under Modi has produced a set of strategic challenges for Pakistan that differ in character from those posed by earlier Indian governments. The most immediate challenge is the shift in India's military doctrine toward more aggressive

conventional options in the sub-conventional space, sometimes described as the Cold Start doctrine or more recent iterations of it. India's willingness to conduct publicly acknowledged surgical strikes and air strikes signals to Pakistan that its tolerance for Pakistani-based militant activity has been significantly reduced, and that the costs of supporting non-state actors against India will be higher under Modi than under previous governments (Cohen & Dasgupta, 2010). This shift in Indian military posture has forced Pakistan into a defensive strategic calculus that has, paradoxically, increased its reliance on its nuclear deterrent as the ultimate guarantor of its security. The Balakot crisis of 2019 demonstrated that Pakistan would not hesitate to retaliate against Indian military action, even at the risk of nuclear escalation, and that the presumed firebreak between conventional conflict and nuclear war in South Asia is narrower than many analysts had previously assumed (Tellis, 2019). The combination of an ideologically assertive India and a nuclear-armed Pakistan with a strong military establishment creates a particularly volatile strategic environment.

Pakistan's strategic response to the Modi government's Hindutva-driven foreign policy has included a deepening of its relationship with China—formalized through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and enhanced military cooperation—as well as greater reliance on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other multilateral forums to raise the Kashmir issue internationally (Haqqani, 2005; Malik, 2020). The convergence of Chinese and Pakistani strategic interests in balancing against India's growing regional assertiveness represents a significant development in South Asian geopolitics, one that has been accelerated by the ideological polarization of the Modi era.

### **Diplomatic Isolation and the Peace Process**

The Hindutva ideological framework has severely damaged the prospects for a revival of the India-Pakistan peace process. The Composite Dialogue Process, which was the primary mechanism for bilateral engagement during the Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh eras, has been effectively

suspended since 2016, with no substantive diplomatic engagement between the two countries' foreign ministries. The abrogation of Article 370 effectively removed the final status of Kashmir from the bilateral agenda, foreclosing the negotiating space that had been painstakingly constructed through track-one and track-two diplomacy over decades (Ganguly, 2016).

In the Hindutva framework, diplomatic engagement with Pakistan is ideologically fraught because it implies a degree of legitimacy for Pakistan's claims on Kashmir and for Pakistani state interests more broadly. For a government whose electoral coalition is built on a narrative of Hindu victimhood and civilizational assertiveness, any diplomatic concession to Pakistan carries significant domestic political costs. This structural incentive against diplomatic engagement is reinforced by the BJP's control of the Indian media landscape and its ability to frame any move toward dialogue as weakness or appeasement (Hall, 2015). Pakistan, for its part, has struggled to find an effective diplomatic strategy for engaging with an ideologically hostile Indian government. Traditional Pakistani diplomatic approaches—linking any bilateral engagement to progress on Kashmir, appealing to international community for conflict resolution, or seeking great power mediation—have had limited traction in an era of Indian strategic assertiveness and American strategic re-alignment toward India as a counterbalance to China (Tellis, 2019). The result has been a diplomatic stalemate that, while stable in the short term, carries long-term risks of miscalculation.

### **The Muslim Minority Factor and Bilateral Perceptions**

A dimension of the ideological transformation in Indian foreign policy that is often overlooked in strategic analyses is its impact on Pakistan's perception of the treatment of India's Muslim minority population. With approximately 200 million Muslims—the world's second-largest Muslim-majority population after Indonesia—India's internal communal politics have direct implications for its bilateral relationship with Pakistan. The Modi government's policies toward

Muslim minorities—including the CAA, the National Register of Citizens (NRC) process, and the demolition of Muslim-owned properties by BJP-governed state authorities—have been widely condemned by Pakistan and used to build a case in Islamic multilateral forums that India is engaged in systematic discrimination against its Muslim population (Bajpai, 2020).

This dimension of the bilateral relationship reflects the extent to which Hindutva ideology operates at both the domestic and international levels simultaneously. When the Modi government makes decisions about Muslim personal law, the demolition of mosques, or the treatment of Muslim protesters, it does so primarily for domestic political reasons—to consolidate the Hindu vote and demonstrate the BJP's commitment to its civilizational agenda. However, these decisions inevitably generate an international response that complicates India's diplomatic relationships with Muslim-majority states, including those in the Gulf that India depends on for energy imports and remittances from its large diaspora (Malik, 2020).

### **Nuclear Risks and Regional Stability**

The most alarming implication of the ideological transformation in Indian foreign policy for Pakistan is its potential impact on nuclear stability in South Asia. Both India and Pakistan possess nuclear arsenals, and both countries' nuclear doctrines are embedded in strategic calculations that were developed in a context of conventional military deterrence. India's declared no-first-use policy, while often questioned in its operationalization, has historically provided a degree of strategic reassurance to Pakistan. However, several senior BJP-affiliated strategic thinkers have publicly questioned the value of the no-first-use commitment, suggesting that ideological assertiveness may eventually translate into a willingness to revise nuclear doctrine in ways that could destabilize the regional deterrence balance (Rajagopalan, 2019).

The Balakot crisis of 2019 demonstrated that the two countries' nuclear arsenals did not prevent conventional military escalation, and that the escalation management mechanisms—such as they

are—in South Asia are insufficiently institutionalized to provide reliable crisis stability (Tellis, 2019). In an environment where Indian foreign policy is driven in part by the imperatives of Hindutva ideology and the domestic political incentives of the BJP's electoral coalition, the risk of miscalculation is elevated. Pakistan's military establishment, aware of this risk, has maintained a posture of nuclear ambiguity that serves as both a deterrent and a warning against further Indian military adventurism.

### **Critical Assessment and Alternative Perspectives**

It is important to acknowledge that not all analysts agree that Hindutva ideology is the primary driver of Indian foreign policy under Modi. Some scholars argue that the continuities with previous Indian foreign policy are as significant as the changes, and that the ideological framing of the Modi government's policies often serves as a rhetorical overlay on fundamentally pragmatic strategic calculations (Hall, 2015). From this perspective, India's assertiveness toward Pakistan reflects the cumulative frustration of successive Indian governments with what India perceives as Pakistan's support for certain groups operating in Kashmir, as well as the growing material capabilities of the Indian state, rather than a fundamentally new ideological orientation.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the Modi government has pursued a generally pragmatic approach to India's major-power relationships, cultivating ties with the United States, Israel, the Gulf states, and Japan in ways that reflect strategic calculation rather than ideological rigidity. India's membership in the Quad security arrangement, its deepening defense cooperation with the United States, and its calibrated management of the relationship with China all suggest a foreign policy that is not simply ideologically driven but responds to the structural imperatives of an emerging major power in a competitive multipolar world (Ganguly, 2016).

However, these alternative perspectives do not negate the central argument of this paper. Ideology and pragmatism are not mutually exclusive in foreign policy; rather, they operate simultaneously and interact in complex ways. The argument here

is not that Hindutva ideology determines Indian foreign policy in a mechanical or deterministic sense, but that it shapes the framing of policy choices, elevates the domestic political costs of diplomatic accommodation with Pakistan, and generates specific policy outputs—such as the abrogation of Article 370 and the public announcement of surgical strikes—that cannot be fully explained without reference to the ideological commitments of the governing party.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has argued that the rise of Hindutva ideology as the governing philosophy of India under Narendra Modi represents a significant ideological transformation in Indian foreign policy, with particular implications for India's relationship with Pakistan. Drawing on constructivist international relations theory, the paper has demonstrated that the reconstruction of Indian national identity along Hindu nationalist lines has reshaped India's threat perceptions, elevated the domestic political costs of diplomatic engagement with Pakistan, and generated a series of policy decisions—the surgical strikes of 2016, the Balakot air strikes of 2019, the abrogation of Article 370, and the Citizenship Amendment Act—that cannot be adequately understood without reference to the ideological imperatives of the BJP and the broader Sangh Parivar.

For Pakistan, the ideological transformation of Indian foreign policy under Modi poses both immediate strategic challenges and long-term diplomatic challenges. In the short term, the increased Indian willingness to use military force, combined with Pakistan's nuclear deterrent and its deep entanglement with non-state militant actors, creates a dangerous environment for miscalculation and unintended escalation. In the long term, the foreclosure of diplomatic space—particularly on the Kashmir issue—means that the structural sources of bilateral conflict remain unresolved, and that the probability of future crises remains high.

The broader implications of this analysis extend beyond the India-Pakistan bilateral relationship. The infusion of Hindutva ideology into Indian foreign policy reflects a global trend toward the

politicization of national identity and the ideological framing of international relations. As India continues to grow as a major power, the character of its domestic ideology will have increasing significance for regional and global order. Understanding the relationship between Hindutva and Indian foreign policy is therefore not merely an academic exercise but a practical necessity for policymakers, diplomats, and scholars seeking to navigate the complex geopolitics of South Asia in the twenty-first century.

Future research in this area should explore several dimensions that this paper has not been able to fully address: the role of the Indian diaspora in propagating Hindutva ideology internationally; the impact of Indian domestic communal politics on third-country perceptions of India as a partner; and the potential for Hindutva-driven foreign policy to generate blowback in the form of radicalization within South Asia's large Muslim population. These questions will become increasingly important as the geopolitical significance of South Asia grows and as the structural tensions generated by the ideological transformation of Indian foreign policy continue to work their way through the regional order.

## REFERENCES

- Bajpai, K. (2020). *India versus China: Why they are not friends*. Juggernaut Books.
- Bharatiya Janata Party. (2014). *Election manifesto 2014: Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat*. BJP National Secretariat.
- Bharatiya Janata Party. (2019). *Sankalp Patra 2019: BJP's vision, mission and manifesto for the 2019 Lok Sabha elections*. BJP National Secretariat.
- Cohen, S. P., & Dasgupta, S. (2010). *Arming without aiming: India's military modernization*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Finnemore, M. (1996). *National interests in international society*. Cornell University Press.
- Ganguly, S. (2016). Has Modi truly transformed India's foreign policy? *The Washington Quarterly*, 40(2), 131-143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660X.2017.1327917>
- Golwalkar, M. S. (1966). *Bunch of thoughts*. Vikrama Prakashan. (Original work published 1939)
- Hall, I. (2015). Is a 'Modi doctrine' emerging in Indian foreign policy? *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 69(3), 247-252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357718.2014.1000263>
- Haqqani, H. (2005). *Pakistan: Between mosque and military*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Human Rights Watch. (2002). *We have no orders to save you: State participation and complicity in communal violence in Gujarat*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2002/04/30/we-have-no-orders-save-you>
- Human Rights Watch. (2019). *India: Revocation of Kashmir's special status*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/05/india-revocation-kashmirs-special-status>
- Jaffrelot, C. (1996). *The Hindu nationalist movement and Indian politics: 1925 to the 1990s*. Columbia University Press.
- Jaffrelot, C. (2015). The Modi-centric BJP 2014 election campaign: New techniques and old tactics. *Contemporary South Asia*, 23(2), 151-166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2015.1027662>
- Jaffrelot, C. (2021). *Modi's India: Hindu nationalism and the rise of ethnic democracy*. Princeton University Press.
- Katzenstein, P. J. (Ed.). (1996). *The culture of national security: Norms and identity in world politics*. Columbia University Press.
- Malik, M. (2020). China-Pakistan relations: A historical and critical analysis. *Pacific Affairs*, 93(1), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.5509/202093143>
- Nehru, J. (1946). *The discovery of India*. Meridian Books.

Nilekani, N. (2009). *Imagining India: The idea of a renewed nation*. Penguin Press.

Puri, H. S. (2016). *Perilous interventions: The security council and the politics of chaos*. HarperCollins India.

Rajagopalan, R. (2019). *Nuclear deterrence and strategic stability in South Asia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Savarkar, V. D. (1923). *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* S. P. Gokhale.

Tellis, A. J. (2019). *A smoldering volcano: Pakistan and terrorism after Pulwama*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/02/27/smoldering-volcano-pakistan-and-terrorism-after-pulwama-pub-78485>

Vajpayee, A. B. (1999). *Lahore Declaration*. Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

Wendt, A. (1999). *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge University Press.

