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# **From Civic Pluralism to Ethnoreligious Majoritarianism: Majority Nationalism in India**

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## **From Civic Pluralism to Ethnoreligious Majoritarianism: Majority Nationalism in India**

This article analyses the changing nature and substance of Indian nationalism since independence in 1947. India provides insights into how state and majority nationalism manifests itself in a democratic post-colonial society. It also draws attention to how state-making and nation-building reflect the dominant political position of the majority nation in a specific state. In India, the state actively sought to accommodate ethnic and linguistic demands through a consensual federal system. In this form, majority nationalism did not always imply majoritarianism. The outcome was a complex asymmetrical federalism that sought accommodation, but also actively opposed secessionist demands by nationalist movements. This accommodationist form of majority nationalism has in recent decades been replaced by an ethno-religious nationalism based on majoritarian and exclusivist principles. The political success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has weakened India's asymmetrical federalism. The trend is away from pluralistic possibilities to a unitary nation-state model. This majoritarian nationalism is characterised by an insistence on Hindutva or Hindu nationalism, intolerance of difference and an insistence that all those who live in India share a common culture, identity and historic past. The decision to repeal Article 370 of the Constitution, which provides a special status for Jammu and Kashmir, is discussed in this context.

Keywords: state nationalism; Indian National Congress; Bharatiya Janata Party; Hindu nationalism

### **Introduction: state and majority nationalism in perspective**

The political success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP: the Indian Peoples Party) in the 2014 and 2019 general elections has transformed Indian politics. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister since 2014, leads a party that was once marginal in the political system. Its progress since 1984 challenged the dominance of the Indian National Congress (Congress) and then replaced it as the new hegemonic centre of the political system.<sup>1</sup>

This success has changed the political, ideological and normative priorities of Indian democracy and recalibrated the nature of Indian nationalism. Indian nationalism now merges with Hindu nationalism which has strong majoritarian features. This political success has serious consequences for Indian federalism, the place and status of minorities and for how secessionist and autonomist issues are addressed. In contrast with the pan-Indian majority nationalism associated with Congress, which was inclusivist and integrationist, that promoted by the BJP is majoritarian, assimilationist and exclusivist. The BJP demonises minorities, condemns opposition as 'anti-national' while creating a climate of fear for groups and communities outside the mainstream of Hindu society. Consequently, the success of the BJP and Hindu nationalism raises questions concerning the contemporary nature of Indian democracy.<sup>2</sup>

During the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, majority nations have come to dominate most states. However, the typical state is 'multi-national' rather than homogeneous, even where the official state policy is to insist that it is a nation-state. Furthermore, in most states, one nation is often in the majority and frequently dominates other national communities.<sup>3</sup> State nationalism reflects this dominance and majority and state nationalism are interchangeable in terms of attitudes, policy making and political culture.<sup>4</sup> Political independence provides the foundation stone for state nationalism. The main objective of state nationalism is to maintain state sovereignty and secure its territorial integrity. Majority nationalists maintain that the state's territory is their homeland and is both sacred and inviolable, making conflict over territory more existential and difficult to resolve.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, 'preventing secession is the cornerstone of majority nationalism'.<sup>6</sup> Nor is state-making a neutral institutional exercise; it has a nationalist interest in achieving these goals.<sup>7</sup> This interest includes nation-building, which is actively

promoted and can have nation-destroying consequences in multi-national states.<sup>8</sup>

Nation-building is especially problematic when a state includes a group who may be citizens but do not consider themselves co-nationals.<sup>9</sup> Nation building in this context is an attempt by the state to make the political and the national unit congruent. In effect, nation-building strategies, even the most benign, seek to impose the national culture of the state on all those who live in the state, irrespective of national or ethnic differences. This is reinforced by the democratic nature of modern political systems and by popular sovereignty, where majority outcomes acquire legitimacy and authority.<sup>10</sup>

In homogeneous states there is no doubt about the national community that the population belong to, whereas in multinational states this is heavily contested. If state nationalism is a product of independence and sovereignty, it is also the expression of the norms, values and culture of the majority national community.<sup>11</sup> In the context of this article, majority and state nationalism are interchangeable. State nationalism promotes the political values of the majority (especially when faced with secession) through education, culture, the constitution and various institutional arrangements. Furthermore, the state reserves the right to use force to defend the national political order established and legitimised by the majority community.

### **The origins of majority nationalism in India**

India provides important insights into the nature of state and majority nationalism in the postcolonial world. In contrast with most postcolonial states, India has remained a democracy since achieving Independence in 1947 (except for a period of Emergency rule between 1975 and 1977). Though not a liberal-democracy, India compares favourably with other states in the region in respect of political and civil liberties.<sup>12</sup> While considerable attention has been paid to the success and shortcomings of Indian democracy, less attention has been paid to the role that nationalism has played in

consolidating democracy while also contributing to destabilisation in some regions.<sup>13</sup>

When India became independent, it was not at all clear who ‘the people’ were for the purposes of constructing a political community. British India was a complex mosaic of territories, princely states, languages and ethnicities. It was questionable whether all those who lived in India could conceive of themselves as Indians.

Even before independence was achieved The Indian National Congress (Congress) was constructing a state nationalism. Jawaharlal Nehru (India’s first Prime Minister) and Congress insisted that the borders of the nation coincided with those of the territory of British India. Partition undermined this claim, but the remaining territory was now deemed inviolable by Congress and reinforced by the dominant assumptions in the Constituent Assembly.<sup>14</sup> Congress also constructed a prepolitical national community by drawing on 5000 years of Indian history. The party appealed to an imagined community which pre-dated the existing political community for authority. While many of the assumptions were modernist, the thinking was primordialist. By drawing on this long historical tradition Congress came perilously close to identifying India with its Hindu population, ‘all the attempts to trace back the unity of the nation to the early empires contributed to identifying the entire Indian history with that of the Hindus’.<sup>15</sup>

The influence of one-nation/one-state persisted despite partition and is reflected in the construction of the Indian Constitution. Officially, India is a Union-state, but many of its characteristics are closer to traditional notions of the nation state. For Home Minister and deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel, the Constitution was ‘laying the foundations of one nation’.<sup>16</sup> B. R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee came close to describing India as a unitary state during discussions in the Constituent Assembly in 1948:

The Federation is a Union because it is indestructible. Though the country and the people may be divided into different States for convenience of administration the country is one integral whole, its people a single people living under a single imperium derived from a single source. The Americans had to wage a civil war to establish that the States have no right of secession and that their Federation was indestructible. The Drafting Committee thought that it was better to make it clear at the outset rather than to leave it to speculation or to dispute.

The Constitution, he maintained, would facilitate the merging of majority and minorities into one national community.<sup>17</sup>

Fears of balkanisation remained strong after independence. Congress leaders insisted on a strong centre to contain secessionist demands and maintain territorial integrity. The Constitution provided institutional and political support for centralisation. Article 356 provided the central government with the power to take over individual states and rule from the centre. In addition, Article 352 provided the government with emergency powers in times of crisis, specifically those which challenged the territorial integrity of the state. These powers have been used extensively. The centre used military force to integrate recalcitrant princely states into the new state. Furthermore, Prime Minister Nehru actively engaged counter insurgency forces against Naga insurgents demanding self-determination; one of many conflicts that have continued to affect the Northeast of India to the present day.<sup>18</sup>

A further reflection of majority nationalism was the decision in Article 342 to declare Hindi the official language, despite the fact that a majority did not speak it. Nehru and Congress opposed compromise on this issue and on demands for the reorganisation of states along linguistic lines. It was believed that national unity and solidarity was best served by having a national language and refusing to accept congruence between language, ethnicity and territory at a sub-state level. Indeed,

Congress had effectively adopted the view that a single language was required for political and national integration, rather than more pluralistic models.<sup>19</sup>

However, in the face of determined and widespread opposition during the 1950s, Nehru was forced to backtrack. The principle of ethno-linguistic states was conceded within a decade, delivering ‘the largest and most peaceful reconfiguration of political space under the rule of law, without recourse to mass violence in the history of liberal democracy’.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, English effectively became the *lingua franca* for national communication. The political intention to impose Hindi as the national language was withdrawn. As Guha wryly notes, if Hindi had been imposed on India the consequences might have been ‘one language, twenty-two nations’ whereas India has twenty two languages and a single nation (for the most part).<sup>21</sup> What India achieved during the 1950s was unusual in comparative terms. Ethnofederalism has been described as the most generous form of federalism but ‘perhaps also the most reckless’ in terms of successfully maintaining the integrity of the state.<sup>22</sup> Yet in India, ethnofederalism provided the means to neutralise autonomist and secessionist movements in the state.

In contrast to the experience of ethnofederalism elsewhere, the linguistic compromise acted as a powerful and successful means of integration, which ‘solidified support for the Indian state and the Indian nation’.<sup>23</sup> During the twenty years after 1947, a pan-Indian majority was constituted and consolidated. While it did not include everyone who lived in India, it is arguable that in time between eighty and ninety per cent of the population considered themselves not only to be citizens but to be co-nationals.<sup>24</sup> Pan-Indian nationalism was in principle inclusive, but there were limits to its appeal and to its integrative dynamic. Nation-building and integration proved much weaker in Kashmir, the Northeast and in the Punjab. Nevertheless, a strategy of accommodation within the framework of pan-Indian state nationalism established the

political basis for compromise in most cases. The Indian experience qualifies the unitary nation-state model normally associated with France. While the Indian state promoted its pan-Indian nationalism through the Constitution, its institutions and its political practice, ethnofederalism provides the means for most language and ethnic groups to cooperate with the state rather than compete with it in a zero-sum secessionist game.

However, the failure to resolve some secessionist conflicts suggests that ethnofederalism will not solve these issues if the conflict is over nationality and religion.<sup>25</sup> The paradox between success and failure can be resolved by adopting Brendan O'Leary's position that a successful federation requires a dominant ethnicity or *Staatsvolk*, to anchor and secure its institutional continuity. In India there are two options: Hindi spoken by 40 per cent of the population or Hinduism the religion of 80 per cent of the population.<sup>26</sup> The Hindi option failed politically and institutionally but did supply a core ethnic basis for Indian state nationalism. A more persuasive option is that Hinduism functions as a meta-ethnicity and this, rather than language, provides the political and cultural glue for a *Staatsvolk*.<sup>27</sup> The political expression of this meta-ethnicity takes an ethno-democratic form.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Katharine Adeney has drawn on these hypotheses to argue that these considerations operate within individual Indian states. The majority of Indian states have a dominant language, religion or ethnicity while in the more stable states the effective number of languages and religions is less than two.<sup>29</sup> Those states that are more heterogeneous, such as Nagaland, Manipur and Kashmir, are more prone to conflict, suggesting that a degree of dominance is required to secure stability. Conflict also appears more often in states and regions where Hindus are not dominant. The shared culture of Hinduism continues to facilitate compromise as proved to be the case since the 1950s. In the absence of this and the presence of other religions and nationalities, conflict seems more likely.<sup>30</sup>

## **The pan-nationalist and Hindu nationalist world views: similarities and differences**

However, the pan-Indian and pluralistic nationalist worldview promoted by Congress since 1947, reflected in the constitution, the secular foundations of the state and the 1950s linguistic compromise is not without challengers. Though established in 1980, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is part of an extensive network of Hindu organisations known as the Sang Parivar (family of organisations). The most important and influential is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS: National Volunteer Corps) set up in 1925.<sup>31</sup> While the RSS remains outside party politics, its political influence is considerable and its members provide active support for the BJP at election times. Moreover, the BJP leadership has been drawn overwhelmingly from the BJP as is the case currently.<sup>32</sup>

There is some overlap between the two positions - both defend India's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, sharing a primordial conception of the nation. However, there are also important differences. The pan-Indian conception of nationalism is multicultural (though not multinational); assimilationist but accommodationist.<sup>33</sup> Although the constitution reflects Hindu views in a number of articles, neither Congress nor Nehru's governments actively promoted a Hindu worldview.<sup>34</sup> Nehru in particular engaged with pluralist and flexible strategies in an attempt to realise 'unity in diversity'. Consequently, policy options were more fluid and open to negotiation; though secessionist demands were always rejected. Nehru undermined the concessions he made to Kashmir because of his fear of secession there, but in doing so he and his successors failed to address the complex issue of nationality and religion in the region. It is arguable that majority nationalism takes on a majoritarian face when faced with these challenges.<sup>35</sup>

The Hindu Nationalist worldview differs from pan-Indian nationalism in a number of ways. It celebrates the ancient origins of Hinduism, emphasising the superiority of Hindu ethnoreligious culture over other national cultures.<sup>36</sup> The foundation text for Hindu Nationalism remains V. D. Savarkar's (1883-1966) *Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?* published in 1923. Savarkar and M. S. Golwalkar (1906-1973), who became head of the RSS in 1940, provided a set of ideas that motivated the RSS and the Sang Parivar. At its core is the notion of a Hindu nation, ancient in origin with a continuous cultural presence on the territory of India. The aim of Hindutva is the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra (state) which reflects the distinctive features of India and its predominant Hindu population. By drawing on the Hindu tradition, Savarkar consciously linked Hindutva with religious practise and its symbols. The continuity can be seen in practical terms when the RSS/BJP mobilise around issues such as the campaign for a Ram temple at Ayodhya or their opposition to the Supreme Court's decision to permit women between 10 and 50 to enter Hindu temples in Kerala.<sup>37</sup>

A core element of Hindutva is the notion of the 'other' and the internal enemy. The sacred nature of territory is made explicit by both Savarkar and Golwalkar and latterly by the BJP/RSS; India is a holy space inhabited by the people, who are not only distinctive but 'chosen'.<sup>38</sup> India is a homogeneous cultural entity, which is inclusive of all those who are deemed part of Hindu culture. Consequently, Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs are Hindus (nationally) though not religiously. Article 25 of the constitution considers Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains to be Hindus for the purposes of the constitution, though this is often rejected by members of these religions.<sup>39</sup> Hindu nationalists also promote the view that Aryans are the original people of India and Sanskrit the original language. They insist that Indo-European languages and culture has its origin in India and spread from there to the rest of the world.<sup>40</sup> Hostility to Muslims and Christians,

who are excluded from the Hindu nation, is central to this thinking and endures to the present day. Savarkar asserted that a 'change of religion means change of nationality'.<sup>41</sup> While Muslims and Christians might share a fatherland with Hindus they do not share India as a 'Holy land' as their holy places are in the Middle East.<sup>42</sup> This thinking links three concepts, *Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan* (language, religion and territory) as the focus for the majoritarian basis of Hindu Nationalism.<sup>43</sup>

### ***The BJP and the mobilisation of Hindutva***

The BJP's original political message was relatively moderate and on the surface inclusive. However the outcome of the 1984 elections, when the BJP won only two seats, demonstrated the significance of political appeals based on culture and religion. The Congress leader Rajiv Gandhi orchestrated a campaign that appealed to majority culture and its prejudices. As a consequence, the party of Hindutva (BJP) was defeated by a party that had traditionally been associated with inclusion and concern for minorities. The BJP also benefitted from the crises generated by the conflict in the Punjab, the unresolved status of Jammu and Kashmir and continuing insurgencies in the Northeast, all of which challenged the majority notion of a single nationality in India.<sup>44</sup>

Other controversies included the question of the conversion of Hindus to other religions; the banning of Salman Rushdie's novel *Satanic Verses* in 1988 and the campaign to build a Ram temple on the site of a Mosque at Ayodhya. The most beneficial issue for the BJP was the Shah Bano decision by the Supreme Court in 1985. The court declared in effect that Muslim marriage and property laws were subordinate to the Constitution in law, while criticising the failure to introduce a Uniform Civil Code for all religions as mandated by the Constitution. Under political pressure from sections of the Muslim community and some of his political allies, Rajiv Gandhi used

his parliamentary majority to override the Supreme Court's decision and reinstate the primacy of Muslim personal law.<sup>45</sup>

The BJP critically reconfigured its focus on issues that questioned minority rights and the relationship between Hindus and Muslims. Subsequent party manifestos emphasised the commitment to Hindutva objectives such as the introduction of a Uniform Civil Code, the ending of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and building a Ram temple at Ayodhya. The party reiterated its commitment to what it described as 'positive secularism', which it claimed reflected the intention of the Constitution. It criticised Congress's alleged privileging of minority interests, coining the term 'minorityism' as a critique of this position. This sought to align the party more consciously with majority images and symbolism. L. K. Advani, President of the BJP, was closely identified with the Ayodhya campaign, orchestrating country wide mobilisation through his Ram *Rath Yatra* in 1990 which embraced Hindu symbolism as reflections of the nation. This mobilisation led to the destruction of the Mosque at Ayodhya in 1992. The BJP also conflated Hindu history with Indian history as Advani explicitly demonstrated in a speech in 1989, 'Yes, it may be essentially Hindu, but it is Indian history, Indian culture and Indian heritage'.<sup>46</sup> There is a strong echo of this in the party publications, including its election manifestos, 'The BJP is committed to the concept of 'One Nation, One People and One Culture'.<sup>47</sup>

A number of structural factors also contributed to the BJP's advance. The political system dealigned in the course of the 1980s, weakening the national reach of Congress in particular and opening up political space for alternatives. The mobilisation of lower caste and Other Backward Castes (OBCs) enhanced India's democratic inclusiveness but also led to political fragmentation and powerful regional parties emerged that challenged the dominance of national parties such as Congress. Similarly,

the recommendations of the Mandal Commission in respect of employment and educational reservations for lower caste groups radicalised sections of upper caste Hindus who, believed they would be excluded from remunerative employment as a consequence. A further destabilising feature was the gradual dismantling of the protectionist economic system that had been in place since the 1950s. This led to dramatic growth but also to considerable uncertainty.<sup>48</sup> The BJP also benefitted from a series of Supreme Court decisions on the relationship between Hindutva and political appeals based on religion.<sup>49</sup> The Court distinguished between Hindutva as a political idea and the practise of Hinduism as a religion. The effect of these judgements was to conflate Hindutva with Indian nationalism and patriotism. Thus, 'the word 'Hindutva' is used and understood as a synonym of 'Indianisation', i.e. development of uniform culture by obliterating the differences between all the cultures co-existing in the country'.<sup>50</sup>

### ***The politics of majoritarianism***

The BJP's achievement has been considerable. From a decidedly marginal position in the party system, Hindu nationalism has become mainstream. The election victories of 2014 and 2019 suggest an electoral realignment in favour of the BJP and Hindu nationalism has occurred.<sup>51</sup> This was never inevitable. The BJP established itself as a major source of opposition to Congress and on a number of occasions as the largest party in the political system. The party also benefitted from the increasing salience of cultural issues and an enhanced electoral appeal at national and state level.<sup>52</sup> The breakthrough for the BJP came when it became an acceptable coalition partner for other parties, as it was in 1998-1999. However, coalition constrained its political objectives. Despite its continuing commitment to Hindutva objectives, in government the party leadership pursued a moderate and conciliatory policy. In particular, controversial

issues, including the status of Kashmir, were left out of the government programme.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, its electorate remained confined to the so-called Hindi belt, drawing support from well educated, professional, upper caste Hindus. As late as 2014, 67 per cent of BJP seats were located in Hindi speaking states.<sup>54</sup>

A further obstacle to the BJP's growth was widespread unease about inter-religious violence, resulting from the Ayodhya confrontation. There was considerable opposition to the destruction of the mosque, though 40.5 per cent of BJP supporters considered it justified. When asked if 'every community should be allowed to have its own laws to govern marriage and property', 46 per cent of Congress supporters agree, while 40 per cent of BJP do. The BJP increased its vote between 1996 and 2004 among all castes; however, Congress and its allies were able to attract more support than the BJP from all other castes and groups, with the exception of the upper castes. A plurality of Hindus (42.3 per cent) voted for the BJP in 2004 while a majority of Muslims and Christians supported Congress. Mitra has described what he calls the BJP's 'ambivalent moderation' which he ascribes to the need to attract moderate voters in a context where Congress and its allies could attract lower caste and minority voters in a winning formula. If the BJP adopted more extreme positions under pressure from their more radical supporters, the party was likely to lose these moderate voters.<sup>55</sup> Electoral defeat in 2004 and 2009 suggested that the party had reached a threshold in terms of its capacity to attract voters and build a coalition to form a government. The BJP appeared to be a majoritarian party without a majority.

However, this period can also be associated with the consolidation of a 'majoritarian middle ground' in public opinion and politics. Though majoritarians are distributed among the two major parties, the nature of majoritarianism and the Hindutva policy mix makes the BJP more attractive to this section of the electorate. Though the

BJP was out of office for ten years, majoritarian attitudes continued to grow. A reflection of this is the strong support for maintaining group boundaries in terms of caste and religion.<sup>56</sup> In 2004, 35 per cent of respondents agreed that ‘in a democracy the opinion of the majority community should prevail’. Approximately 35 per cent disagreed and a significant 30 per cent did not have an opinion on the question. These figures had not changed significantly by 2009. However, by 2014 the percentage agreeing with the proposition had increased to 51.6 per cent, while 21.7 per cent disagreed and 26.7 had no opinion.<sup>57</sup>

Those who hold majoritarian views are more likely to support the BJP. Minorities are more likely to reject majoritarian views, on the grounds that they would entail the imposition of Hindu culture on them. However, there is some confusion about who the majority is; only 39 per cent say they are part of the majority community, while 30 per cent consider themselves to be part of a minority community. Over 40 per cent disagreed with the proposition that minorities should adopt the customs of the majority community, though some 30 per cent agreed. However, a majority agreed that central or state government should treat minorities the same as they treat majorities.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, majoritarianism is reflected in other ways. Nearly two thirds of respondents agreed that films that hurt the sentiments of any community should be banned. Just over 43 per cent agreed that the country should be ruled by ‘a strong leader who does not have to bother about winning elections’, while just under 40 per cent held the same view about non-elected experts. By 2017, a majority of Indians favoured military rule, while a further 65 per cent favoured rule by experts. 55 per cent were in favour of rule by a strong leader. Opinion has hardened in response to the crisis in Kashmir. In earlier polls there was significant support for a negotiated settlement, though minorities did advocate severe repression. In 2017, nearly two thirds of

respondents believed that the government should use ‘more military force than it is using now’; only 8 per cent believed that it should be using less.<sup>59</sup> These data suggest that majoritarianism is widespread but also that support for democracy is weaker than often thought.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Building a majority within the majority***

These majoritarian sentiments turned to political advantage in 2014 and 2019. As figure 1 highlights, Congress held its own until 2014, when the BJP surged ahead and won a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha for the first time.

Figure 1: Vote for Congress and BJP, 1984-2019

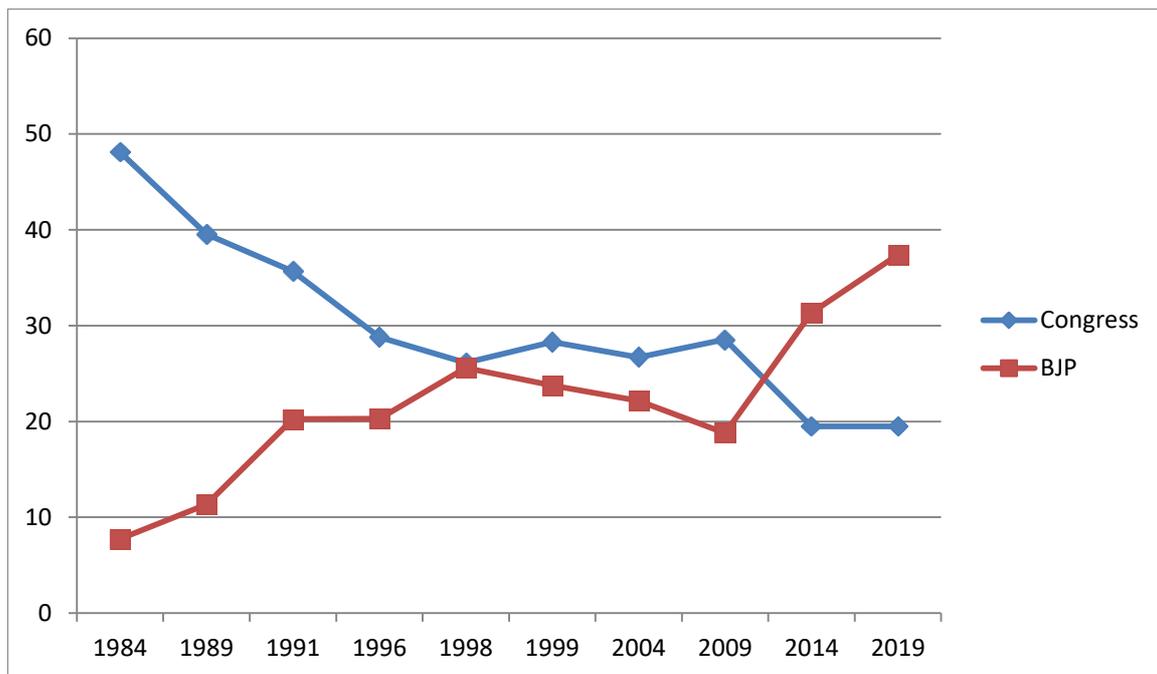


Figure 1 Percentage Vote for Congress and BJP 1984-2019

These elections demonstrated that the BJP could win a majority of seats by concentrating on Hindu voters.<sup>61</sup> It has pursued a strategy based on the ethno-democratic assumption that it could command a majority within the ethnic majority (Hindus) to establish its electoral domination.<sup>62</sup> The BJP has few Muslim members and

no MPs from that community. Despite its own claim to be a pan-Indian party, it remains an ethno-religious party reflected in its political appeal and electorate. The party explicitly rejects the more inclusive forms of majority nationalism associated with Congress, condemning them as appeasers and implicitly anti-national.<sup>63</sup>

The long-term strategic aim of the BJP has been to undermine the electoral alliance between Muslims and lower caste Hindus that has dominated politics in a number of states. This has been successful in Bihar, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, among others. By polarising the Hindu and Muslim communities the BJP has successfully attracted a growing proportion of Hindus from all castes to provide it with a majority. Some analysts suggested that the BJP would find it difficult to secure majorities in states where Muslims constituted more than 20 per cent of the electorate.<sup>64</sup> However, this obstacle was overcome by concentrating the Hindu vote in a single party and reducing the effective number of parties that Hindus vote for. A key factor is that the BJP is no longer a party restricted electorally to Hindi speakers or to upper caste Hindus.<sup>65</sup> It can now appeal to Hindus as an ethnic group and does so at national level (Table 1).

Table 1: Hindu Caste Vote in 2014 and 2019

Hindu Caste	Vote for BJP 2014 (%)	Vote for BJP 2019 (%)	Vote for BJP Allies 2014 (%)	Vote for BJP Allies 2019 (%)
All Hindus	36	44	7	8
Hindu Upper Castes	47	52	9	7
Hindu Other Backward Castes	34	44	8	10
Hindu Dalits	24	34	6	7

Source: Lokniti/CSDS Post-Poll Survey 2014 and 2019 in Sardesi and Attri, 'Post-Poll survey'

The political reality is that the National Democratic Alliance (BJP +Allies) attracted 51 per cent of the Hindu vote in a political system where Hindus constitute

approximately 80 per cent of the population. The BJP won 54 of the 84 seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and 32 out of the 47 reserved for Scheduled Tribes. While the BJP has expanded and consolidated its support among all Hindu castes, less than one in ten Muslims vote for the party or its allies. Moreover, the percentage of Christians and Sikhs who support the BJP or its allies has declined between the two elections.<sup>66</sup>

These findings are reinforced at the state level, where the BJP has increased its vote share among Hindus. In Assam for instance, the BJP and its allies increased their share of the Hindu vote from 58 to 70 per cent. Overall the NDA received a majority of Hindu votes in 11 states.<sup>67</sup> It is only in Tamil Nadu and Kerala that the NDA appeal was restricted to 29 per cent and 22 per cent respectively (though in each case there is an increase over the 2014 vote).<sup>68</sup> West Bengal provides a significant case study of how the BJP has expanded its support between 2009 and 2019 by polarising opinion and focussing on the Hindu vote (Table 2).<sup>69</sup>

Table 2: Party Vote in West Bengal: 2009-2019

Party	2009 % (seats)	2014 % (seats)	2019 % (seats)
Congress	13.45 (6)	9.58 (4)	5.61 (2)
BJP	6.15 (1)	16.84 (2)	40.25 (18)
All India Trinamool Congress (TMC)	31.18 (19)	39.35 (34)	43.28 (22)
Left	43.31 (15)	29.61 (2)	6.28 (-)

[Source: Source: Lokniti-CSDS Post-Poll Survey 2014 and 2019 in Chatterjee and Basu, 'Post-Poll survey: When the Left moved right in West Bengal']

The BJP's success in West Bengal confirms the party's ability to compete outside Hindi speaking areas of India. It also suggests that the transformation of Indian politics seen in 2014 is continuing. The BJP now attracts a majority of votes from every caste in West Bengal, while only 4 per cent of Muslims vote for it. Muslim voters have largely abandoned the Left or Congress and now support the TMC. Approximately a

third of former 'Left' and 'Congress' voters shifted to the BJP, largely because of polarisation tactics pursued by the party during the election campaign.<sup>70</sup>

While economic and social issues played a part in the 2019 campaign, key messages from the BJP emphasised nationalist issues such as terrorism, national security and illegal migration. These had a statistically significant impact on the electorate, especially among the young.<sup>71</sup> After the 2019 election the BJP are closer to achieving Amit Shah's objective of a *Congress Mukh-Bharat* (Congress-free India). It may also be in a position to ignore the opposition altogether.<sup>72</sup> Modi and his government now occupy the centre-ground in Indian politics, which has moved decisively rightward since 2014. The government is in line with the view of the RSS leader Mohan Bhagwat who insists that 'everyone who lives in India is Hindu by identity, nationality'. He maintained that the RSS does not accept that minorities exist in India as the term 'gave the impression of difference, whereas all people are the same'. As a consequence, 'A Hindu Rashtra is not possible with minorities'.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Kashmir, Article 370 and the limits to national integration***

The BJP's political success has emboldened Modi's government to promote new legislation against terrorism, to restrict freedom of information and to redefine citizenship to reflect its ethno-religious perspective. It is most in evidence in the case of Jammu and Kashmir where the BJP has ended the region's special status and downgraded it from a State to a Union Territory. This reflects the party's commitment to 'one country, one people and one nation', which presumes a unitary nation state.<sup>74</sup> The BJP considers that nation building is incomplete and repeatedly criticises India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his successors for compromising India's unity and for making concessions to Kashmiri sentiment. This is regularly contrasted with the militant actions of Nehru's deputy, Sardar Patel, who according to Modi saved

India from balkanisation.<sup>75</sup> Along with the Punjab and areas of the Northeast, Jammu and Kashmir challenges the self-image of Indian nationalism, while establishing the limits to national integration presumed by state and majority nationalism. While nation-building and political integration has been successful over most of India since independence, the strategy has also generated nation-enabling on the part of cohesive national communities such as the Naga and the Kashmiris that resist these integrationist policies.

Article 370 has been described as ‘a unique provision that carried the spirit of asymmetrical federalism to its limits within the Indian constitutional order.’<sup>76</sup> Hindu nationalists have consistently opposed Kashmir’s special status on the grounds that it undermines national unity and integration. This fear of secession ignores the existence of Kashmiri political identity which articles 370 and 35a were attempts to address.<sup>77</sup> Between the 1950s and 1980s the generous arrangements for Kashmir were eroded and undermined by successive governments and direct rule was imposed frequently to neutralise political outcomes that were not acceptable to the Indian state. It was only after 40 years of this treatment that a military insurgency challenged the legitimacy of the Indian state in Kashmir.<sup>78</sup>

Kashmir has become one of the most militarised regions in the world and Indian security forces act with impunity against the local population (whether militants or not).<sup>79</sup> Polling reveals that a significant majority (70 per cent plus) of those living in the Kashmir Valley favour an independent state for Kashmir, incorporating territory from both sides of the border. Moreover, Kashmiris are far less likely to consider themselves Indian citizens than do other Muslims in India or the general population.<sup>80</sup> No Indian government has been prepared to consider the independence option, nor have they been prepared to recognise that support for greater autonomy is not necessarily secessionist.

Nevertheless, no Indian government to date has opted to end the formal special status of the region. Nor until recently have the BJP been able or prepared to implement its long-standing policy in this respect.

In a carefully constructed speech in December 2013, Modi maintained that Jammu and Kashmir had to be transformed, adding that the existing policy had sown the seed of a 'separate state'.<sup>81</sup> In its election manifesto, the BJP reiterating its commitment to removing article 370, but promised to include all 'stakeholders' in the discussions. Moreover, when the BJP formed a coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir with the Peoples Democratic Party (a predominantly Kashmiri party), it agreed not to pursue the issue of status as the price for forming this coalition. The RSS openly criticised the party for doing so and its current leader Mohan Bhagwat reiterated the organisations commitment to change in speeches in late 2018.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, continuing insurgency and confrontation between the Indian security forces and Kashmiri civilians hardened the BJP position, as did military confrontation with Pakistan in 2016 and again in 2019. Critics who argued for moderation, conciliation or greater autonomy were condemned as anti-national by Modi and the BJP. In stark contrast to 2014, the 2019 election manifesto focused on national security, India's military response to Pakistan and unremitting hostility to secession and terrorism. After the successful insurgent attack on Indian security forces in February 2019, Prime Minister Modi orchestrated his government's response to achieve maximum effect. He claimed that the Indian air force strikes against bases in Pakistan were a 'fitting, jaw breaking response to attack' and that the army would have a 'free hand' to deal with insurgents in Jammu and Kashmir. He maintained that 'The blood of people is boiling', adding at another meeting, 'I feel the same fire in my heart that's burning you'.<sup>83</sup> For his close confidant and BJP President Amit Shah this was an

election ‘to ensure the country’s national security’. According to Shah the BJP government was ‘re-establishing the ideals of nation building’. During the election campaign he promised to scrap Jammu and Kashmir’s special status as this was an appeasement to minorities. In the manifesto itself, the BJP reiterated ‘our position since the time of the Jan Sangh to the abrogation of Article 370’. Likewise there was a commitment to removing Article 35a from the Constitution on the grounds that it discriminated against Indians from outside Kashmir.<sup>84</sup>

The groundwork for a change of policy had been laid in June 2018, when the BJP withdrew from the coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir and the central government imposed direct rule on the state. When direct rule was extended in June 2019, Shah told the Lok Sabha that ‘The Kashmir issue has been lingering since 1947’ insisting that the ‘Valley is ours ... as far as terrorists and separatists are concerned there is no place for them in the country’. This was reinforced by Jilendra Singh, Minister of State in the Prime Minister’s Office, who identified ‘Nehruvian blunders are responsible for the current status of the State’. When the decision to repeal Articles 370 and 35a in August 2019 was announced, many of these arguments were further rehearsed. In an address to the nation, Modi made it clear that the decision was taken to fully integrate Jammu and Kashmir into the state:

Article 370 has to be revoked because it undermines the parliament of India. The law of the nation does not reach Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan uses this to instigate separatism in the hearts of the people there.

As a consequence the wishes of the majority of those who live in the region were ignored and the wishes of the state (majority nationalism) imposed on them in majoritarian fashion.<sup>85</sup>

The decision on Jammu and Kashmir delivers on a key commitment by Hindu nationalism, demonstrating that government office does not necessarily moderate a party with strong ideological commitments. A party committed to majoritarian outcomes can override long standing political commitments to federalism and compromise.<sup>86</sup> For Shah the decision ‘corrects a historic blunder’ on the part of the Congress party because Article 370 does not unite India but ‘keeps it apart’. In an Independence Day speech on August 15, Modi maintained that the actions taken completed the process of national integration, ‘one nation, one constitution spirit has become a reality now’.<sup>87</sup>

## **Conclusion**

If policy in respect of Jammu and Kashmir represents the most overt expression of majoritarianism, this does not exhaust the BJP’s policy options. The party has proved to be more flexible than its ideology suggests.<sup>88</sup> In the Northeast, it has pursued an innovative strategic approach that involves alliances with local parties in a region once considered inhospitable to Hindutva. Their challenge here is to attract Hindu votes while recognising the distinct interests of Assamese, Naga and other indigenous nations. The BJP’s long term objective is to integrate the region politically into the national community.<sup>89</sup>

The Indian case draws attention to the complex and often subtle differences between state, majority and majoritarian nationalism. In homogeneous nation-states, when state and nationhood are contiguous, state nationalism expresses majority nationalism based on consensus. Because there is no doubt about identity or territory there is no case for secession. However, only approximately 10 per cent of the world’s states can be reasonably considered nation-states (e.g. Japan or Iceland). Most states are multinational states, but most of them (including India) deny that this is the case.

Consequently, there is an assumption that all those who live in the state are members of a single nation. This reluctance to acknowledge the multinational nature of a state alters the nature of state nationalism, as states reflect the interests and political claims of the majority nation. This, however, does not necessarily make state nationalism majoritarian. Majority nationalism may maintain its defence of the state's territorial integrity, while acknowledging the need to provide a generous degree of self-determination or devolution to a disputed region. Belgium, Canada and the United Kingdom have adopted policies to reflect this reality, as has India under Nehru.

The term 'state-nation' has been coined to distinguish between the unitary nation-state that is often the objective of majority nationalism and the asymmetrical federalism that evolved in India to accommodate challenges from ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities. In the decades after independence, the Indian state actively promoted integration but also sought to accommodate secessionist movements in the North East, Kashmir and the Punjab. Articles 370 and 35a were especially innovative in this respect. The balance achieved between the claims of majority nationalism and other nationalisms has now collapsed and India no longer meets the criteria set for 'state-nations'.<sup>90</sup> The BJP treats minorities (whether national or religious) as threats to national unity and cultural uniformity. In the case of Jammu and Kashmir the Modi government has abandoned any prospect of a negotiated settlement within a federal system and adopted a national-security strategy to impose its solution. This completes the shift from majority to majoritarian nationalism in India. When the state autonomously acts to give effect to the majority nation's claims over a disputed territory, majoritarianism is fully realised.



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- <sup>1</sup> Suhas Palshikar, 'Towards Hegemony: BJP beyond Electoral Dominance' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 53: 33, (2018), 36-42; Suhas Palshikar, Sanjay Kumar, Sanjay Lodha, *Electoral Politics in India: The Resurgence of the Bharatiya Janata Party* (London: Routledge, 2017).
- <sup>2</sup> Pradeep K. Chhibber and Rahul Verma, *Ideology and Identity: The Changing Party System of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), 235-55; Angana P. Chatterji, Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, 'Introduction' in *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India* ed. Angana P. Chatterji, Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, (London: Hurst, 2019), 1-15.
- <sup>3</sup> Eric Kaufmann and Oded Haklai, 'Dominant ethnicity: from minority to majority', *Nations and Nationalism* 14: 4 (2008), 743-67
- <sup>4</sup> Neophytos Loizides, *The Politics of Majority nationalism: Framing Peace, Stalemates, and Crises* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2015), 1-8; Alexis Heraclides, 'Ethnicity, secessionist conflict and the International society: Towards normative paradigm shift' *Nations and Nationalism* 3: 4, (1997). 493-520; John Coakley, 'National Majorities in New States: Managing the Challenges of Diversity' in *Contemporary Majority Nationalism*, eds. Alain-G. Gagnon, André Lecours and Geneviève Nootens, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), 101-24;
- <sup>5</sup> Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen People: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1-8; 131-65; Burak Kaderman, 'Nationalism and war for territory: from 'divisible' territories to inviolable homelands', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 30: 4 (2017), 368-93
- <sup>6</sup> Loizides, *The Politics of Majority Nationalism*, 5-6
- <sup>7</sup> Josep Costa, 'On theories of secession: minorities, majorities and the multinational state', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 6Z: 2 (2003), 63-90, 68
- <sup>8</sup> Walker Connor, 'Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying', *World Politics* 24:3 (1972), 319-55; L. W. Barrington (Ed.), *After Independence: making and protecting the nation in postcolonial and postcommunist states* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006)
- <sup>9</sup> Alain Dieckhoff, 'The Paradoxes of Contemporary Nationalism' in Gagnon, Lecours and Nootens, *Contemporary Majority Nationalism*, 21-42.

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- <sup>10</sup> Harris Mylonas, 'Assimilation and its Alternatives: Caveats in the Study of Nation-building Policies' in *Rethinking Violence: States and Non-State Actors in Conflict*, ed. Erica Chenoweth, and Adria Lawrence, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 84-116; Harris Mylonas, *The Politics of Nation-Building: Making Co-Nationals, Refugees, and Minorities* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013);
- <sup>11</sup> Kaufman and Haklai, 'Dominant ethnicity', 759
- <sup>12</sup> Freedom House provides India with an aggregate score of 75 out of 100 (though Kashmir is excluded). It is ranked 2 for political rights and 3 for civil liberties (1 is best). Pakistan has an aggregate score of 39, Bangladesh 41 and Sri Lanka 56 (by way of comparison China has a score of 11); data can be accessed at <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2019>
- <sup>13</sup> There is a considerable literature on Indian democracy; Alistair Mcmillan, 'Deviant Democratization in India', *Democratization* 15: 4, (2008) 733-49; Arend Lijphart, 'The Puzzle of Indian Democracy: A Consociational Interpretation', *American Political Science Review*, 90: 2, (1998), 258-68; Steven Ian Wilkinson, 'India, Consociational Theory, and Ethnic Violence' *Asian Survey*, 40: 5, (2000), 767-91; Alfred Stepan, Juan J Linz, and Yogendra Yadav, *Crafting State-Nations: India and Other Multinational Democracies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 1-38; Paul R. Brass, *The Politics of India since Independence* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7 for some qualifications to this.
- <sup>14</sup> Judith M. Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 157-82
- <sup>15</sup> Michael Gottlob, 'India's Unity in Diversity as a Question of Historical Perspective' in *Economic and Political Weekly* 42: 9, (2007) 779-789; Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Penguin Books: Gurgaon, 2010 [orig.ed. 1946])
- <sup>16</sup> Gyanendra Pandey, *Remembering Partition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 162-63
- <sup>17</sup> Constituent Assembly Debates 1948, (Vol VII 4 November) available at <http://164.100.47.194/Loksabha/constituent/Constituent.aspx>
- <sup>18</sup> Sajal Nag, 'Nehru and the Nagas: Minority nationalism and the Post-Colonial state' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 44: 49 (2009), 58-55; Sanjay K. Roy, 'Conflicting nations in North-East India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40: 21 (2005), 2176-82; Thongholal Haokip, 'Political Integration of Northeast India: A Historical Analysis', *Strategic Analysis*, 36: 2 (2012), 304-14.

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- <sup>19</sup> Stepan, Linz, and Yadav, *Crafting State-Nations* 1-38.
- <sup>20</sup> Sujit Choudry, 'Language' in *The Oxford Handbook of the Indian Constitution* eds. Sumit Choudry, Madhav Khosla, and Pratap Bhanu Mehta, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, (2016), 180-95; Bethany Lacina, 'How Governments Shape the Risk of Civil Violence: India's Federal Reorganization, 1950-56', *American Journal of Political Science* 58: 3, (2014), 720-38
- <sup>21</sup> Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's largest Democracy* (London: Macmillan, 2007), 754
- <sup>22</sup> Coakley, 'Managing Majorities', 106
- <sup>23</sup> Katharine Adeney, 'Does ethnofederalism explain the success of Indian federalism?' *India Review* 16: 1, (2017), 125-48.
- <sup>24</sup> Katharine Adeney and Marie Lall, 'Institutional Attempts to Build a "National Identity" in India: Internal and External Dimensions' in *Indian Review*, 4: 3-4, (2005) 258-86; Gurharpal Singh, and Heewon Kim, 'The limits of India's ethno-linguistic federation: Understanding the demise of Sikh nationalism', *Regional and Federal Studies* 18: 4, (2018), 427-45; Subrata Mitra 'Citizenship in India: Some Preliminary Results of a National Survey' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45: 9, , (2010), 46-53
- <sup>25</sup> Giovanni Cappoccia, Lawrence Sáez and Eline de Roij, 'When State Responses Fail: Religion and Secessionism in India 1952-2002' *The Journal of Politics*, 74: 4, (2012), 1010-22
- <sup>26</sup> In 2011, 79.8 per cent of the population identified as Hindu;  
<https://www.census2011.co.in/religion.php>
- <sup>27</sup> Brendan O'Leary, 'An Iron law of nationalism and federation? A (neo-Diceyan) theory of the necessity of a federal *Staatsvolk*, and of consociational rescue' *Nations and Nationalism* 7: 3, (2001), 273-96.
- <sup>28</sup> Gurharpal Singh, *Ethnic Conflict in India: A Case Study of Punjab* (Macmillan: Houndmills, Basingstoke, 2000), 35-55; Jaffrelot, 'A *De Facto* Ethnic Democracy? Obliterating and Targeting the Other, Hindu Vigilantes, and the Ethno-state' in Chatterji, Hansen and Jaffrelot, *Majoritarian State*, 41-68.
- <sup>29</sup> Adeney, 'Does ethnofederalism explain the success of Indian federalism?', 132
- <sup>30</sup> Adeney, 'Does ethnofederalism explain the success of Indian federalism?', 133-38

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- <sup>31</sup> Bruce Desmond, *Hindu nationalism and Indian Politics: The Origins and Development of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s* (London: Hurst, 1996), 25-79; Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave: Democracy and Hindu Nationalism in Modern India* (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 60-133
- <sup>32</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot (Ed.), *The Sang Parivar: A Reader* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005); Walter Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle, *Messengers of Hindu Nationalism: How the RSS Reshaped India* (London: Hurst, 2019)
- <sup>33</sup> Perry Anderson, *The Indian Ideology* (London: Verso, 2003), is highly critical of Nehru and his governments.
- <sup>34</sup> A ban on cow slaughter was introduced in 14 Hindu dominated states after the constitution was ratified. In many cases Congress was in political control at the time, Wilkinson, 'India, Consociational Theory and Ethnic Violence', 767-91
- <sup>35</sup> A. G. Noorani, *Article 370: A Constitutional History of Jammu and Kashmir* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011)
- <sup>36</sup> BJP, *Ek Bharat Sheshtha Bharat: BJP Election Manifesto 2014* (New Delhi: BJP, 2014), 1-3 at [www.bjp.org/manifesto2014](http://www.bjp.org/manifesto2014)
- <sup>37</sup> Talal Asad, 'Religion, Nation-State, Secularism' in *Nation and Religion: Perspectives on Europe and Asia*, ed., Peter Van Der Veer and Hartmut Lehman, (Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1999), 178-96.
- <sup>38</sup> Smith, *Chosen People*: 1-8; 131-65; Duncan McDonnell, and Luis Cabrera, 'The right-wing populism of India's Bharatiya Janata Party (and why comparativists should care)' *Democratization*, 28:3, (2019), 484-501 whose interviews with current members of the BJP illustrate the continuing salience of these ideas.
- <sup>39</sup> V. D. Savarkar, *Hindutva: What is a Hindu?* 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Bombay: S. S. Savarkar, 1923/1969) available at <https://ia600609.us.archive.org/19/items/hindutva-vinayak-damodar-savarkar-pdf/hindutva-vd-savarkar.pdf>; Christophe Jaffrelot, (Ed.), *Hindu nationalism: A Reader* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 85-171;
- <sup>40</sup> Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism*, 18 notes that Hindu nationalists use the word 'vanavasi' which means 'those who live in the forest' for 'indigenous peoples' rather than 'adivasi' which means 'those who were there first'. The latter term is used throughout India but is incompatible with Hindutva ideology; Tony Joseph, *Early Indians: The Story of our*

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*Ancestors and Where we came from* (New Delhi: Juggernaut Books, 2018) for a comprehensive critique of the out of India position based on recent DNA findings.

<sup>41</sup> Cited in Tanika Sarkar, 'How the Sangh Parivar Writes And Teaches History' in *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Changing India* ed. Angana P. Chatterji, Thomas Blom Hansen and Christophe Jaffrelot, (London: Hurst, 2019), 151-173, 155

<sup>42</sup> Savarkar, *Hindutva*, 113

<sup>43</sup> Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism*, 5; Sammy S. Khan, Ted Svensson, Yashpal A. Jogdand and James H. Liu, 'Lessons from the past for the future: The definition and mobilisation of Hindu nationhood by the Hindu nationalist movement in India', *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 5: 2 (2017), 477-512

<sup>44</sup> Sumantra Bose, 'Hindu Nationalism' and the Crisis of the Indian State: A Theoretical Perspective' in Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (Eds.) *Nationalism, Democracy and Development: State and Politics in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 104-64; Zoya Hasan, *Congress after Indira: policy, Power, Political change (1984-2009)*, (New Delhi: OUP, 2012)

<sup>45</sup> Guha, *India after Gandhi*, 579-82; see also *Danial Latifa & Anr v. Union of India* (2001) where the Supreme Court clarified the constitutionality of the legislation; the case is discussed in Rochana Bajpai, *Debating Difference: Group Rights and Liberal Democracy in India*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178-224

<sup>46</sup> Kameshwar Choudhary, 'BJP's Changing View of Hindu-Muslim Relations', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 26: 33, 1901-04

<sup>47</sup> Ashutosh Varshney, 'Contested Meanings: India's National Identity, Hindu Nationalism and the Politics of Anxiety' *Daedalus*, 122: 3 (1993), 227-61

<sup>48</sup> Stuart Corbridge and John Harris, *Reinventing India: Liberalization, Hindu nationalism and Popular Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 93-139

<sup>49</sup> The Supreme Court declared in *SR Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) 'In matters of State, religion has no place. No political party can simultaneously be a religious party' cited in Saumya Saxena, 'Court'ing Hindu nationalism: law and the rise of modern Hindutva', *Contemporary South Asia*, 28: 4 (2018), 378-99; 382 for quote

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, Saxena, 'Court'ing Hindu nationalism', 383

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- <sup>51</sup> Suhas Palshikar, K. C. Suri and Yogendra Yadav, *Party Competition in Indian States: Electoral Politics in Post Congress Polity* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014); Palshikar, Kumar and Lodga, (Eds.) *Electoral Politics in India*.
- <sup>52</sup> Hasan, *Congress after Indira*; Yogendra Yadav, 'Electoral Politics in the time of Change: India's third Electoral System, 1989-99' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 34: 34-35 (1999), 2293-99
- <sup>53</sup> Shaila Seshia, 'Divide and Rule in Indian Party Politics: The Rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party' *Asian Survey*, 38: 11 (1998), 1036-50; Walter Andersen, 'Evolution of a Hindu-orientated Political Party', *SAIS Review of International Affairs* 37: 15, (2017), Supplement, S-7-S-19; Saba Naqui, *Shades of Saffron: From Vajpayee to Modi* (Chennai: Westlands Publications, 2018), 29-35
- <sup>54</sup> Subrata Mitra and V. B. Singh, *Democracy and Social Change in India: A Cross-sectional Analysis of the National Electorate* (New Delhi: Sage, 1999), 134-5; Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity*, 247-8.
- <sup>55</sup> Subrata K. Mitra, 'The Ambivalent Moderation of Hindu Nationalism in India' *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 48: 3 (2013), 269-85, 280-83 for data; Andersen, 'Evolution of a Hindu-oriented political party', S-14, maintains that 'The BJP, if it expects to remain a major player on the national scene, must make an appeal to the 14 percent of the population that is Muslim'; Ashutosh Varshney, 'Hindu Nationalism in Power?' *Journal of Democracy*, 25: 4 (2014), 34-45
- <sup>56</sup> Suhas Palshikar, 'Majoritarian Middle Ground?' *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39: 51, (2004), 5426-30; Lokniti/CSDS 'National Election Survey', 2004
- <sup>57</sup> Palshikar, 'Majoritarian Middle Ground', 5426-430; Lokniti/SCDS, 'National Election Survey post poll' 2009, 2014 available at <https://www.lokniti.org/national-election-studies>; Alfred Stepan, 'India, Sri Lanka, and the Majoritarian Danger' *Journal of Democracy*, 26: 1 (2015), 128-40; in Sri Lanka the percentage that agree that 'the will of the majority community must prevail' is 89 per cent, 136
- <sup>58</sup> Lokniti/CSDS, 'National Election Survey post poll' 2009, 2014 available at <https://www.lokniti.org/national-election-studies>;
- <sup>59</sup> Pew Research Center, 'Three Years In, Modi Remains Popular' (2017), 15; 44-5 available at [www.pewresearch.org](http://www.pewresearch.org); Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity*, 250-53, suggest that younger Indian cohorts are more liberal than older generations.

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- <sup>60</sup> Thomas Blom Hansen, 'Democracy Against the Law: Reflections on India's Illiberal Democracy' in Chatterji, Hansen and Jaffrelot, *Majoritarian State*, 19-40; Jaffrelot, 'A *De Facto* Ethnic Democracy?', in Chatterji, Hansen and Jaffrelot, *Majoritarian State*, 41-68.
- <sup>61</sup> Rekla Diwakaar, 'Change and continuity in Indian politics and the Indian party system: Revisiting the results of the 2014 Indian general election', *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics* 2: 4 (2017), 327-46; Chhibber and Verma, *Ideology and Identity*
- <sup>62</sup> The architect of the BJP's successes is Amit Shah, Modi's closest adviser and now Home Minister, Anirban Ganguly and Shiwanand Dwivedi, *Amit Shah and the March of the BJP* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2019); Suhas Palshikar, 'The BJP and Hindu Nationalism: Centrist Politics and Majoritarian Impulses' *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38: 4 (2015), 719-35; Varghese K. George, 'The Gujarat model, nationally', *The Hindu* June 17, 2019
- <sup>63</sup> Heewon Kim, 'Understanding Modi and minorities: The BJP-led NDA government in India and religious minorities', *India Review*, 16: 4 (2017), 357-76; Christophe Jaffrelot and Gilles Verniers, 'The Dwindling Minority', *Indian Express*, July 30 2018; BJP, *Sankalp Bharat Sashakt Bharat: Sankalp Patra (Vision Document) Lok Sabha 2019*, (BJP: New Delhi, 2019), 3
- <sup>64</sup> Varshney, 'Hindu nationalism in power?', 38-40; Andersen, 'Evolution of a Hindu-orientated Political Party', S-17-18
- <sup>65</sup> Shreyas Sardesai, Pranav Gupta and Reetika Sayal, 'The Religious Fault Line in the 2014 Election', *Research Journal Social Sciences*, 22: 2 (2014), 28-44; Table 5, 37; Unless noted, data for the 2019 election is drawn from the Lokniti post-poll survey reported by Shreyas Sardesai and Vibha Attri, 'Post-poll survey: the 2019 verdict is a manifestation of the deepening religious divide in India' *The Hindu* May 30, 2019.
- <sup>66</sup> Lokniti/CSDS Post-Poll Survey 2014 and 2019 in Sardesai and Attri, 'Post-Poll survey'
- <sup>67</sup> Hilal Ahmed and Dhruva Pratim Sharma, 'Post-poll survey: BJP's polarisation strategy hits the mark in Assam', *The Hindu*, May 28, 2019
- <sup>68</sup> It has been suggested that the BJP is pursuing a long term strategy in Kerala similar to that which has been successful in Assam and West Bengal; E. K. Santha, 'Saffron Headway in Kerala' *Economic and Political Weekly*, June 11, 2016; P. K. Yasser Arafath, 'Hindutva's onward march in Kerala' *The Hindu* June 4, 2019
- <sup>69</sup> Jyotiprasad Chatterjee and Suprio Basu, 'Post-poll survey: when the Left moved right in West Bengal' *The Hindu* May 28, 2019; <https://scroll.in/article/924510/amar-saffron-bangla-five-reasons-for-the-bjps-surge-in-bengal>

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- <sup>70</sup> Chatterjee and Basu, 'Post-Poll survey: When the Left moved right'
- <sup>71</sup> Lokniti-CSDS post- poll survey reported in Jyoti Mishra and Amrit Negi, 'Post-poll survey: BJP, the most preferred party of young India' *The Hindu* May 29, 2019.
- <sup>72</sup> James Manor, 'Can Modi and the BJP Achieve and Sustain Hegemony?' in Chatterji, Hansen and Jaffrelot, *Majoritarian State*, 117-30
- <sup>73</sup> These comments were made during a three day conference entitled 'Future of Bharat: An RSS Perspective' 17-19 November 2018. They can be read at <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/rss-bharat-of-future-mohan-bhagwat-on-mob-lynching-homosexuality-reservations-10-key-takeaways-1344276-2018-09-20> ; <https://theprint.in/opinion/silence-speaks-louder-than-words-what-rss-chief-mohan-bhagwat-didnt-mention/123551/> ; <https://theprint.in/opinion/amit-shah-says-bjp-to-rule-for-50-years-mohan-bhagwat-is-preparing-the-blueprint/123533/> ; McDonnell and Cabrera, 'The right-wing populism of India's Bharatiya Janata Party', 484-501.
- <sup>74</sup> BJP, *Ek Bharat Sheshtha Bharat: BJP Election Manifesto 2014*, 8, at [www.bjp.org/manifesto2014](http://www.bjp.org/manifesto2014); Narendra Modi, 'One nation, one constitution spirit has become a reality now' at <https://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-prime-minister-shri-narendra-modi-s-address-to-the-nation-from-the-ramparts-of-the-red-fort-on-the-73rd-independence-day-546008>
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