



**THE REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
INSTITUTE FOR AREA STUDIES**

**HINDUTVA IDEOLOGY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA-TÜRKİYE
RELATIONS: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION**

Master's Thesis

Ömer Faruk İSKENDERLİ

Master of Arts in Asian Studies

August 2024



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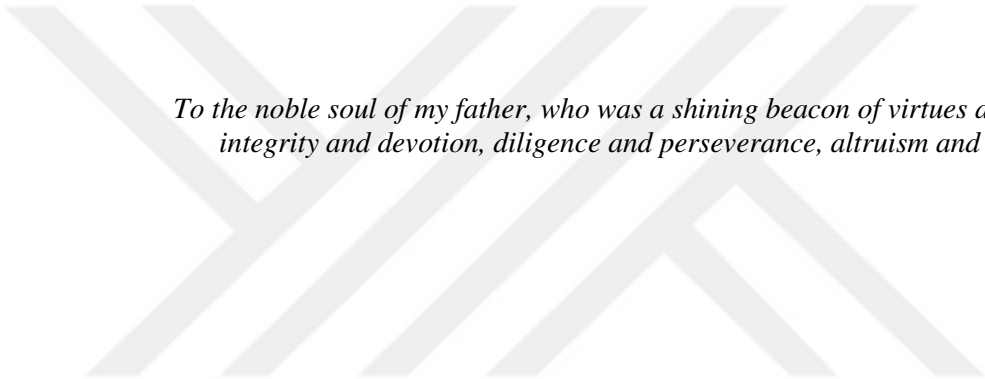
ETHICS STATEMENT

I hereby declare that I have collected all the written and audio-visual material presented in this thesis in accordance with academic rules and ethical principles; that I have fully cited and referenced all material that is not original to this work in compliance with scientific norms; and that this thesis is the product of my own original work except where indicated by referencing.



Ömer Faruk İSKENDERLİ

DEDICATION



*To the noble soul of my father, who was a shining beacon of virtues and idealism,
integrity and devotion, diligence and perseverance, altruism and compassion.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my thesis supervisor, *Assistant Professor Dr Zeynep Tuba Sungur*, for her invaluable guidance and support. Without her meticulous attention to detail, thoughtful feedback, and encouragement, I would not have been able to gather my thoughts and produce a thesis worthy of consideration. Her commitment to perfection has been a guiding light throughout this academic journey.

I am also deeply grateful to *Associate Professor Dr Ferhat Çağrı Aras* and *Associate Professor Dr Elem Eyryce Tepeciklioğlu* for their constructive critiques and comments, which have significantly enriched this work. Special thanks to *Professor Dr Şebnem Köşer Akçapar*, for introducing me to the scholarly study on India, and to all my professors at ASBU and Ankara University, particularly *Professor Dr Melek Melahat Fırat*, *Associate Professor Dr Hatice Çelik* and *Assistant Professor Dr Yusuf Avcı*, whose guidance and contributions have greatly shaped my academic development. I extend heartfelt thanks to my classmates, especially *Dr Zameer Careem*, for thought-provoking discussions and perspectives have broadened my understanding of the topics at hand.

I am profoundly indebted to my schoolteachers for their formative influence on my intellectual and personal development: *Ahmet Çetin*, for igniting within me a passion for social justice and human solidarity; *Nilgün Güvenç*, for inspiring me to pursue scientific studies; *Dr Melih Timuçin*, for expanding my horizons through immersion in English via the finest of the world music; *Ercan Yılmaz*, for revealing the profound insights in poetry and arts; and my mentor extraordinaire, *Yüksel Efil*, for unveiling the straight path of light carried through aeons as embers hidden within the scriptures including the Vedas and Upanishads, and the unbearable lightness of mainstreaming.

I am deeply obliged to my managers for their understanding and support during my time away from work. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to my team for their flexibility and willingness to step in during my absence. I am particularly grateful to my mentor in profession, *Hüseyin Tan*, for his excellent suggestion to engage in Area Studies research. My sincere thanks also go to our erudite circle of the *Roof Terrace Society* and to my long-time friend, *Ufuk Tokathoğlu*, for their continuous encouragement during my thesis.

Finally, I am eternally grateful to be blessed with my family, my source of meaning, love, and care; providing me with the strength and motivation, guidance, and encouragement when I needed most.

CONTENTS

DEDICATION	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ÖZET	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES	9
INTRODUCTION	1
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND	6
SCOPE OF THE THESIS	14
LITERATURE REVIEW	16
THESIS STRUCTURE	21
RESOURCES	23
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	24
1.1. CONVERGENCE-DIVERGENCE APPROACH	24
1.2. RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM AND FOREIGN POLICY	27
1.2.1. <i>Cases of Religious Nationalism in the World</i>	30
1.2.2. <i>Theoretical Approaches</i>	32
1.3. INTRODUCTION OF CONCEPTS	35
CHAPTER 2: HINDUTVA’S EARLY INFLUENCES: SEEDS OF REFORM AND HINDU IDENTITY	43
2.1. EMERGENCE OF HINDU NATIONALISM IN 19 TH CENTURY: BRAHMO SAMAJ AND ARYA SAMAJ	43
2.2. TRANSFORMATION OF HINDU NATIONALISM IN 20 TH CENTURY: TILAK VS. GANDHI	47
2.3. HINDUTVA AS CONCEPTUALISED BY SAVARKAR.....	51
2.4. IMPACT OF BRITISH DIVIDE-AND-RULE POLICIES IN FORMING HINDUTVA	56
CHAPTER 3: EVOLUTION OF HINDUTVA IN INDIAN POLITICS: FROM FRINGE TO POWERHOUSE	66
3.1. ESTABLISHMENT OF BJP.....	66
3.2. BJP’S “NUCLEAR NATIONALISM”	69
3.3. BJP UNDER MODI.....	72
3.4. HINDUTVA’S ENDURING INFLUENCE ON INDIAN POLITICS	74
CHAPTER 4: EVOLUTION OF INDIA’S FOREIGN POLICY AND HINDUTVA’S INFLUENCE	84
4.1. EVOLUTION OF INDIA’S FOREIGN POLICY.....	84

4.1.1.	<i>Nehruvian Era (1947-1964).....</i>	84
4.1.2.	<i>Gandhian Era (1966-1989).....</i>	88
4.1.3.	<i>Post-Cold War Era (1991-2014)</i>	90
4.1.4.	<i>Modian Era (2014-present).....</i>	96
4.2.	EVOLUTION OF INDIA’S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS TÜRKİYE.....	101
4.2.1.	<i>Phase I: Initial Warmth and Cold War Estrangement (1947-1965).....</i>	102
4.2.2.	<i>Phase II: Gradual Thaw and Pursuit of Economic Interests (1965-1980s).....</i>	105
4.2.3.	<i>Phase III: Renewed Engagement and Ideological Transformation (1990s-2010s).</i>	106
4.2.4.	<i>Phase IV: Deepening Economic Ties and Lingering Political Challenges (2010s- Present)</i>	108
CHAPTER 5: INDIA AND TÜRKİYE IN A STRATEGIC EMBRACE IN 21ST CENTURY.....		112
5.1.	INDIA AND TÜRKİYE’S NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS IN POST-2014 ERA	112
5.2.	GEOSTRATEGIC CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES BETWEEN INDIA AND TÜRKİYE IN 21 ST CENTURY.....	116
5.2.1.	<i>Indian Ocean Region (IOR).....</i>	117
5.2.2.	<i>Eastern Mediterranean Sea</i>	125
5.2.3.	<i>Landlocked Eurasia.....</i>	129
CONCLUSION		137
REFERENCES		144

ÖZET

Bu tezde, küresel düzeyde yükselen iki güç olan Hindistan ve Türkiye arasında gelişen ikili ilişkiler eleştirel bir bakış açısıyla incelenmektedir. Bu iki devletin stratejik çıkarları, hem ortak hedefler doğrultusunda bir araya gelmelerine (yakınsama) hem de rekabetçi bir ortamda karşı karşıya gelmelerine (ıraksama) neden olmaktadır. Bu yakınsama-ıraksama çerçevesinden hareketle, bir etnik-dini milliyetçi ideoloji olan Hindutva'nın, Başbakan Narendra Modi'nin 2014 yılında iktidara gelmesinden bu yana Hindistan'ın Türkiye politikası üzerindeki 'ıraksatıcı' etkisi bu çalışmanın odağında yer almaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Hindistan'daki temel tarihi ve politik gelişmelerin kapsamlı bir analizinin yapılarak Hindutva ideolojisinin yükselişinin ve iktidara taşınmasının; bunun yanı sıra bağımsızlık sonrası dönemdeki tarihi ve siyasi gelişimlerin Hindistan dış politikasını nasıl şekillendirdiğinin ortaya konulması iki ülke arasındaki ilişkilerin dinamiklerini anlamanın anahtarını sunmaktadır. Hindistan-Türkiye ilişkilerinin jeopolitik ve ekonomik boyutlarının da incelendiği bu çalışmada, hem işbirliği fırsatları (yakınsama) hem de ideolojik engeller (ıraksama) tarafından oluşturulan zorluklar vurgulanarak, gerek Hindistan gerekse Türkiye için önemli ekonomik çıkarların ve etkileşimin söz konusu olduğu üç jeostratejik bölge ele alınmaktadır: (1) Hint Okyanusu Bölgesi, (2) Doğu Akdeniz ve (3) İç Avrasya. Bu analiz, Hindistan'ın Türkiye'yi önemli ticaret yollarında saf dışı ederek Türkiye ile tartışmalı ilişkileri olan diğer ülkelerle ittifak kurma konusundaki stratejik adımlarını ortaya koymaktadır. Hindutva ideolojisinin BJP liderliğindeki Hindistan'ın attığı bu adımlar üzerindeki olası etkileri sorgulandığı bu tezde özellikle Türkiye'nin stratejik marjinalleştirilmesine yönelik yaklaşımın önemli ölçüde Hindutva ideolojisinden beslendiği sonucuna varılmaktadır. Buna rağmen, bu ideolojinin Hindistan'ın dış politikasını yönlendiren yegâne unsur olmadığına dikkat çeken bu çalışma, ekonomik çıkarlar, realpolitik ve küresel güçleri dengeleme arzusunun hâlâ önemli roller oynadığına işaret etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hindistan-Türkiye ilişkileri, Hindutva, Hindu milliyetçiliği, dini milliyetçilik, Hindistan dış politikası, yakınsama ve ıraksama.

ABSTRACT

This thesis offers a critical analysis of the evolving bilateral relations between India and Türkiye, two rising global powers. The strategic interests of these nations often converge, leading to cooperation, but they also diverge due to competitive dynamics. Within this framework of convergence and divergence, this study focuses on the ‘divergent’ impact of Hindutva ideology, a form of ethno-religious nationalist ideology, on India’s foreign policy towards Türkiye since Narendra Modi assumed power in 2014. Through a comprehensive analysis of key historical and political developments in India, this study examines how the rise and dominance of Hindutva ideology, coupled with post-independence historical and political developments, have shaped India’s foreign policy. This provides a key to understanding the dynamics of India-Turkey relations. The study further explores the geopolitical and economic dimensions of India-Türkiye relations, emphasising both the opportunities for cooperation, i.e. convergence, and the challenges posed by ideological barriers, i.e. divergence. In particular, the thesis examines three geostrategic regions where both India and Türkiye have crucial economic interests and encountering each other: (1) Indian Ocean Region, (2) Eastern Mediterranean, and (3) Landlocked Eurasia. This analysis reveals India’s strategic steps in sidestepping Türkiye in major trade routes and forge alliances with other countries that have contentious relations with Türkiye. The thesis questions the potential influences of the Hindutva ideology on such steps taken by BJP-led Indian government and concludes that the approach, particularly towards the strategic marginalisation of Türkiye, is significantly influenced by Hindutva ideology. However, while acknowledging the significance of Hindutva, the study also points out that economic interests, realpolitik, and the desire to balance global powers continue to play crucial roles in shaping India's foreign policy.

Key words: India-Türkiye relations, Hindutva, Hindu nationalism, religious nationalism, Indian foreign policy, convergence and divergence.

ABBREVIATIONS

AHAD: American Hindus Against Defamation

AIML: All India Muslim League

AK Party: Official abbreviation for Justice and Development (*Adalet ve Kalkınma*) Party (Türkiye)

ARF: ASEAN Regional Forum

ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations

BJP: Bharatiya Janata (Indian People's) Party

BJS: Bharatiya Jana Sangh (Indian People's Union)

BRI: Belt and Road Initiative

BRICS: An informal group of states comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa

BTK: Baku-Tbilisi-Kars Railway

CAA: Citizenship Amendment Act (India)

CAS: Comparative Area Studies

CBMs: Confidence-Building Measures

COVID-19: Coronavirus Disease 2019

CTBT: Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

EAS: East Asia Summit

G20: Group of Twenty is an international forum made up of the world's major economies.

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

IMEC: India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor

INC: Indian National Congress

INSTC: International North-South Transport Corridor

IOR: Indian Ocean Region

JCETC: India–Türkiye Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation

JUH: Jamiat Ulama-i Hind (or Council of Indian Muslim Theologians)

Middle Corridor: A trade route connecting Europe and East Asia via Türkiye, the Southern Caucasus and Turkestan.

NAM: Non-Aligned Movement

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NCF: National Curriculum Framework

NRC: National Register of Citizens (India)

OIC: Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

ORF: Observer Research Foundation

PMO: Prime Minister’s Office (India)

Quad: Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Australia, India, Japan, and the United States)

RSS: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Organisation)

SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

US: United States

UN: United Nations

VHP: Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council)

WEF: World Economic Forum

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Lapis Lazuli Route in the Ancient East.....	7
Figure 2. Sixteen members of the Presidential Guard Regiment.....	9
Figure 3. A Map of the Countries between Constantinople and Calcutta	12
Figure 4. PM Modi during 200 th birth anniversary of Saraswati	45
Figure 5. One of the Earliest Depictions of Bharat Mata	57
Figure 6. “From Attock to Cuttack” and “Kashmir to Kanyakumari”	80
Figure 7. A Map the Indian Ocean Displaying the Countries with a Coastline	118
Figure 8. A Map of IMEC and Development Road.....	121
Figure 9. A Map of the Disputed Maritime Territories in Eastern Mediterranean	126
Figure 10. Landlocked Eurasia or “The Pivot Area”	130
Figure 11. A Map of INSTC Connecting India and Europe	131
Figure 12. A Map of the Middle Corridor	132
Figure 13. Türkiye and the Afroeurasian Connectivity	134

INTRODUCTION

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to
constitute

India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity;

and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the
unity and integrity of the Nation

Constitution of India, Preamble (2024)

The global landscape is experiencing a period of profound change, marked by shifting power dynamics, rising regional tensions, and a need for new partnerships. Amidst this volatility, the relationship between India and Türkiye offers an intriguing case study of two increasingly important players finding strategic conjunction in their foreign policy objectives. The growing significance of this strategic conjunction between India and Türkiye stems from several factors driven by geopolitical considerations, economic imperatives, security concerns, and the evolving dynamics of international multilateral partnerships. Firstly, at a geopolitical level, it can be asserted that both countries seek to balance regional powers like Russia and China by closer engagements with rising democracies alike. Türkiye's geographical location at the crossroads of Europe, Asia, and Africa or, in other words the heartland of Afroeurasia¹, makes it a crucial player in securing India's energy and trade routes as any other major world power. Secondly, Türkiye's ascendance as an economic and military power opens doors for a robust strategic partnership with India. For Türkiye, India's massive market and ambitious infrastructure plans present lucrative opportunities for exports and investments. Also, both nations share a common interest in diversifying their energy sources, creating

¹ Please refer to 1.3. Introduction of Concepts for details.

further avenues for collaboration. Thirdly, both India and Türkiye have faced growing concerns regarding terrorism, particularly from radical Islamist groups following the US involvements against Soviet occupation in Afghanistan (1979-1989), then against Taliban (2001-2021) and Baath's regimes in Iraq (1990-1991 and 2003-2011) and Syria (2014 onwards). This shared threat could foster cooperation in securing Turkestan² region and collaborating on maritime security in the Indian Ocean and Mediterranean. Finally, both nations aspire to greater global influence and see opportunities for collaboration in multilateral forums like the G20, Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and BRICS.

On the other hand, ideological differences stemming from India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) adherence to the "Hindutva"³ ideology of ethnoreligious nationalism, Türkiye's longstanding fraternal ties with Pakistan, and pre-existing impediments in trade, transportation, and connectivity infrastructure pose significant challenges to this relationship. While a promising potential exists for a mutually beneficial partnership between India and Türkiye, certain challenges may impede the realisation of full strategic alignment. Recognising and addressing shared interests, navigating potential sensitivities, and fostering open dialogue are essential for building a robust and sustainable relationship.

Historical sensitivities, particularly around Kashmir and the Armenian issue, demand delicate analysis⁴. Moreover, divergent domestic political landscapes and potential competition for resources in resource-rich regions like the Eastern Mediterranean, Africa and Turkestan could impair tensions. Although the strategic rationale for closer India-Türkiye relations seems evident, their high-level engagements suggest a different reality. While the interactions between Indian and Turkish leadership have occurred within multilateral forums like the G20 and World Economic Forum (WEF), bilateral state visits by Indian Prime Ministers to the Turkish capital Ankara have been notably absent for the past two decades. This scarcity of high-level engagement,

² Please refer to 1.3. Introduction of Concepts for details.

³ Please refer to 1.3. Introduction of Concepts for details.

⁴ Türkiye's support for Pakistan on Kashmir hurt Indo-Turkish relations. Turkish President Erdogan's comments on Kashmir in 2020 strained ties, leading to a decline in high-level meetings. Despite the tension, recent discussions focused on economic cooperation, suggesting economic ties might be prioritized for the future. (Das and Ghoshal, 2022)

despite demonstrably positive efforts from the Turkish political leadership, warrants further examination and analysis to understand the underlying factors at play⁵. Moreover, the trade relationship between India and Türkiye requires closer scrutiny, especially given the notable cease in India–Türkiye Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation (JCETC) meetings since the BJP came to power in India (2014)⁶ (MEA, 2023). Despite both nations’ strong economic growth, the absence of high-level bilateral discussions is intriguing and the lack of institutionalised engagement through the JCETC casts doubt on the possibility of the conscientious convergence in consideration of the future of their economic relationship.

The “saffron⁷” thread of the ideology of *Hindutva*’s has grown increasingly prominent in the vibrant tapestry of Indian politics in recent years. This ideology advocating for a Hindu-centric nation, or *Hindu Rashtra*, which has witnessed an outstanding rise, has been shaping not only domestic politics but also casting a long shadow on India’s foreign policy. Understanding this phenomenon requires scrutinising its historical roots, analysing its socio-political drivers, and examining its potential ramifications on the global stage. Tracing the origins of *Hindutva* requires navigating a complex historical landscape. It emerged in the late 19th century colonial India amidst growing anxieties within some segments of the Indian population while the concept of Muslim separatism was also gaining traction concurrently. Whether *Hindutva* arose as a direct response to an ethno-religious awareness of Muslim minority or whether they developed in a more symbiotic fashion, remains a subject of ongoing scholarly debate

⁵ An analysis of high-level meetings reveals a trend of imbalanced engagement in India–Türkiye relations. Since 2003, Turkish officials, particularly Presidents and Foreign Ministers, have initiated most high-level visits, often on the sidelines of multilateral forums. Notably, the last Indian Prime Ministerial visit to Türkiye occurred in 2003 under the first government led by BJP. This suggests a potential lack of proactive engagement from the Indian side. However, recent meetings, including the 2023 G20 Summit and participation in the “India–Türkiye Policy Planning Dialogue,” indicate some efforts to revive bilateral engagement. Further research is needed to understand the underlying reasons for the imbalance and explore prospects for a more mutually driven relationship. (*Embassy of India Ankara, Türkiye*, October 2023)

⁶ The JEC, established in 1983 through the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement signed in 1978, has facilitated ten meetings between the two countries, with the last one held in New Delhi in January 2014 (MEA, 2023).

⁷ Please refer to 1.3. Introduction of Concepts for details.

(Aiyar, 2020, p. 5; Andersen and Damle, 1987, p. 26; Barkey et al., 2021, p. 84; Sharma, 2002, p. 21 etc.). What needs to be underlined is that both movements undoubtedly challenged the previously dominant narrative of a united Indian opposition to British colonial rule based on the “Divide and Rule” policy.

Looking at today’s context, Hindutva’s recent political ascendance is undeniably intertwined with the rise of the BJP which holds power in the world’s largest democracy since 2014. The BJP’s effective use of socio-economic anxieties, particularly among the growing middle class grappling with rapid social change and globalisation, resonated with Hindutva’s narrative of cultural identity and belonging (Babur and Akhtar, 2021, p. 9; Bannerji, 2006, p. 384; Barkey et al., 2021, p. 241; Jain, 2010, p. 19; Kumar HM, 2013, p. 460; Mohan and Padmanabhan, 2022, p. 33; Sharma, 2002, pp. 25, 30; Zafar et al., 2018, p. 227 etc.). This, coupled with the skilful manipulation of historical grievances (Barkey et al., 2021, p. 351; Mohan and Padmanabhan, 2022, p. 28) and national security concerns (Barkey et al., 2021, pp. 280, 291; Mohan and Padmanabhan, 2022, pp. 37, 41), fuelled the ideology’s rise. The BJP’s emphasis on Hindu identity and its policies targeting religious minorities have challenged the traditional commitment to secularism enshrined in the Indian constitution (Mohan and Padmanabhan, 2022, p. 57). This has not only exacerbated domestic tensions but also impacted India’s foreign policy trajectory (Mohan and Padmanabhan, 2022, p. 58; Zafar et al., 2018, p. 228). While historical tensions with Pakistan remain a factor, it is noticeable that India’s approach in foreign policy has shifted from the principles of multilateralism and non-alignment towards a more pragmatic and assertive stance (Jain, 2010, pp. 40, 56, 58, 72; Zafar et al., 2018, p. 229-230).

The ascension of Prime Minister Modi in the 2014 election heralded a new phase in Indian politics, where neoliberal economic policies fitted perfectly with the BJP’s Hindu nationalist agenda, rather than tempering it. This synergy illustrates that economic liberalisation under Modi’s governance has not sidelined but rather bolstered the BJP’s majoritarian ideology of Hindutva. This ideological framework emerges partly as a response to India’s integration into global neoliberalism since 1991, a period characterised by economic liberalisation and market-oriented reforms. The recent agricultural reforms, which sparked widespread protests, exemplify this approach by aiming to enhance productivity through market deregulation, thereby challenging

longstanding protections for farmers. However, distinctively, Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism under the BJP seeks not just economic transformation but also societal reorganisation under the cultural hegemony of Hindu majoritarianism⁸. This approach aims to mould a populace of entrepreneurial consumers whose actions are guided by Hindu nationalist principles, thereby addressing the quest for existential stability amidst rapid socio-economic change, or what is described as the ‘ontological security’ by Anthony Giddens (Kinnvall, 2007, p. 29). This ideological alignment underscores how Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism, originating from colonial discourses, has adapted to neoliberal realities to assert itself as a defining force in contemporary Indian governance and identity politics (Shani, 2021, p. 266).

Furthermore, Shani (2021) notes that the 2019 Indian national election victory facilitated the BJP’s pursuit of a Hindu nationalist agenda rooted in Hindutva principles, empowered by an absolute majority in the lower house of the India’s bicameral parliament, *Lok Sabha*, or House of the People, that freed Modi from coalition constraints. Hindutva, as conceptualised by the BJP, aims to assimilate India’s religious minorities into a unified Hindu national culture, framing nationalism as a cultural rather than religious or theocratic concept. Unlike the Indian National Congress’ (INC) secular approach, which sought to integrate minorities within a broadly Hindu-majority framework in post-Partition India, the BJP’s vision redefines Indian nationalism around the Hindu majority’s myths and memories, effectively ethnicising Hindu identity through the Hindutva discourse. This ideological shift finds institutional support in organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or “National Self-Service Organisation”, and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), or “World Hindu Council”, collectively forming the Sangh Parivar, or “the Family of the Organisation” (referring to RSS) which operates as a potent force influencing India’s socio-political fabric. Recent legislative moves such as the abrogation of Article 370⁹, the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya which is

⁸ Please refer to 1.3. Introduction of Concepts for details.

⁹ Article 370, previously granting Jammu and Kashmir special status within the Indian constitution, was abrogated by the Indian government in 2019, with the Supreme Court upholding its constitutionality in December 2023.

to be explained further, and the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)¹⁰ exemplify the BJP's commitment to advancing Hindutva objectives, often at the expense of minority communities. This trajectory towards a 'Hindu Rashtra' underscores the BJP's transformational impact on India's national identity and political landscape, presenting a stark choice for minorities between assimilating into a 'saffronised' public sphere or facing marginalisation and exclusion in a nominally secular state (Shani, 2021, p. 265). Employing Orientalist tropes and anxieties about demographic change, Hindu nationalists demonise Muslim minority in India as perennial invaders threatening to colonise India through procreation (Ghose, 2014; Shani, 2021, p. 272).

While proponents of Hindutva celebrate its assertiveness on the world stage, concerns abound regarding its potential consequences. Critics argue that the erosion of secular values and democratic principles within India could undermine its global standing and tarnish its image as a pluralistic society (Çınar et al., 2012, pp. 12, 73, 77). Furthermore, the strained relations with neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan, could escalate regional tensions, jeopardising stability and cooperation. Additionally, the international community views India's domestic religious tensions with growing unease whereby India's international standing could be affected by perceptions of growing religious intolerance and human rights violations, potentially impacting its global partnerships and economic opportunities. The rise of Hindutva, therefore, presents a complex conundrum for India and the world. While it has undoubtedly reshaped the nation's domestic and foreign policy landscape, the long-term implications remain uncertain. Analysing this 'saffron surge'¹¹ necessitates careful consideration of its historical context, its socio-political drivers, and its potential consequences on both the domestic and international fronts.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The rise of Hindutva has significantly reshaped India's domestic and foreign policy landscape. Exploring its impact on India's relationship with Türkiye, one of the

¹⁰ CAA fast-tracks citizenship for persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, excluding Muslims, and has been criticized for religious discrimination.

¹¹ Please refer to 1.3. Introduction of Concepts for details.

most strategically crucial nation situated in the heartland of Afroeurasia, would also necessitate investigating the historical context, analysing the potential *convergence and divergence* of interests between India and Türkiye, while assessing the future trajectory of this intrigued construction.

The relationship between India and Türkiye, spanning millennia, resembles an intricate historical voyage defined by periods of both interconnection and separation. The earliest testimony of this relationship predates written records, with archaeological evidence suggesting well-established trade links between the Indus Valley Civilisation (3300-1300 BCE) and Anatolia via Mesopotamia and Iranian Plateau (Dales, 1977, p. 68; Dalmia and Malone, 2012, p. 1031; Reade, 2008, pp. 12-14; Sarianidi and Kowalski, 1971, p. 15), as seen in Figure 1.

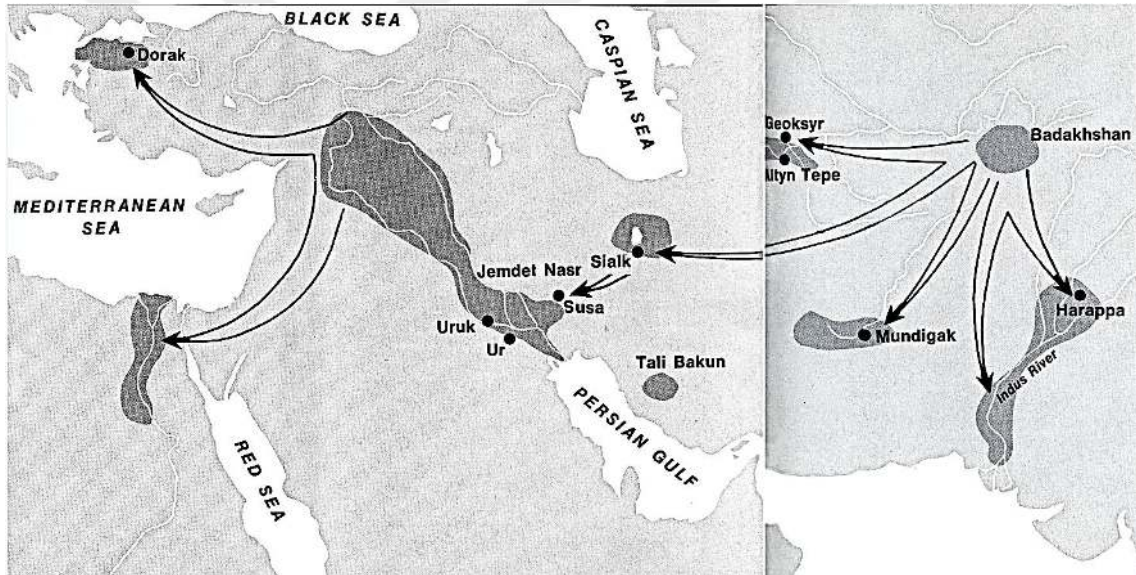


Figure 1. The Lapis Lazuli Route in the Ancient East¹².

Turkestan region, a crossroads of cultures and empires, holds a significant place in both modern Turkish national identity and India's pre-colonial past. This region, spanning from the Caspian Sea in the west to the Gobi Desert in the east, and from Siberia in the north to Tibet in the south, has served as a wellspring of cultural heritage, linguistic roots, and historical connection throughout Eurasian Continent. It played a fascinating role in shaping pre-colonial India as well (Salam, 2018, pp. 264-7).

¹² From "The Lapis Lazuli Route in the Ancient East" by Sarianidi and Kowalski (1971).

These early interactions laid the groundwork for centuries of cultural exchange and mutual awareness between the two countries. From the 4th to the 16th centuries, various Turkish¹³ dynasties emerging in this region interacted with India driven by the pursuit of power, wealth, religious influence, and cultural exchange. This historical legacy is cherished by the Turkish state. As seen in Figure 2 below, the Presidential Emblem of Türkiye displays a 16-pointed star¹⁴ that represents 16 independent great Turkish states throughout history, four of which, i.e. Hephtalites (together with preceding Alchon Huns¹⁵ and succeeding Turk Shahis), Ghaznavids, Timurids and House of Babur (i.e. Indo-Timurids or Mughals¹⁶), almost continuously ruled particularly in the Northern India for 15 centuries.



¹³ Please refer to 1.3. Introduction of Concepts for details.

¹⁴ The official website of the Presidency of Turkish Republic lacks a comprehensive description of the presidential seal and the identification of the sixteen historical states it depicts in foreign languages. While the official narrative, including both the list and accompanying historical context, is available on the website, it is currently offered only in Turkish: <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/cumhurbaskanligi/resmi-simgeler/fors/>

¹⁵ Prior to Alchon Huns, Kushanas ruled in the north of the Indian Subcontinent between 100-300 CE is also considered to be of Turkic origins (Malone, 2011, p. 26).

¹⁶The denomination “Mughal” is highly controversial. The House of Babur is undeniably a branch of Timurids, thus a Turkish dynasty (Salam, 2018, p. 97).



Figure 2. Sixteen members of the Presidential Guard Regiment¹⁷

In early times, Buddhism served as a significant bridge, with Turkic speaking scholars translating Sanskrit texts and missionaries propagating the faith throughout Turkestan influencing other key states in early Turkic speaking peoples' history such as Kok Turks and Uighurs (Abdukadir et al., 2016, pp. 219, 225; Meinert and Sorensen, 2020, pp. 191, 201). Although Turk Shahis played a key role in protecting the Indian subcontinent from the Islamic expansion during the Umayyad and Abbasid Caliphates

¹⁷ From "Hangisinin Tarihinde 16 Devlet Var?" by Sabah, 2015. The image showcases the extensive use of national symbolism associated with the Turkish Presidential Emblem. Since President Erdoğan's tenure began, the Presidential Guards have adopted uniforms inspired by the 16 historical "Turkish states", including those that once occupied parts of India, such as the Hephthalites, Ghaznavids, Timurids, and Mughals. The Presidential Emblem is included in the image and the captions are translated in English by the author of the thesis in keeping with the official description by the Presidential Website.

(Wink, 2020, p. 60; Vondrovec, 2010, p. 181; University of Vienna, 2012), following the Islamisation of Turkic speaking tribes, dynasties like the Ghaznavids, influenced by a range of religious, economic, political, and strategic considerations initiated a series of raids and conquests into northern India. These campaigns aimed to open the subcontinent to Islamic influence as well as to secure territory, resources, and political power. Though often marked by conflict, they also advertently facilitated the spread of Islam, particularly through Sufi influences.

Not all Turkic interactions with India were driven by hard power, though. Trade flourished along the Silk Road, connecting Turkestan and India in a vibrant exchange of goods, ideas, and technologies particularly during the Delhi Sultanate between 1206-1526 (Malone, 2011, p. 29). Turkish scholars, mystics, and artists also contributed to India's cultural landscape, influencing architecture, literature, and artistic traditions. More than just a dynasty, the Mughals, established by Babur, a descendant of both Timur and Genghis Khan, stand as a towering testament to the enduring Turkish presence in India (Malone et al., 2015, p. 560; Pande, 2017, p. 27). Ruling for over three centuries, they left an indelible mark on Indian administration, art, architecture, culture and mind. Their motivations were multilayered, encompassing political consolidation, economic power, religious influence, and cultural exchange. While conversions were often gradual and influenced by local contexts, the spread of Islam through some Turkish dynasties had a significant impact on India. Islam became a major religion, leaving a legacy in architecture, literature, and social practices.

Further in the historical timeline, the relationship between two of the major gunpowder empires of the early modern period, Türkiye¹⁸ ruled by the Ottoman dynasty and India ruled by the Timurid Mughals, shaped by interaction of strategic interests, religious affinities, and geographical constraints, left behind a legacy of historical interaction. While direct engagement remained limited, their story remains a noteworthy example of how distant empires could navigate both cooperation and competition within a broad historical context (Pay, 2015, p. 285). While diplomatic ties existed, the vast geographical distance and differing regional priorities limited direct political and military collaboration between the two empires. Both empires focused on their own territorial

¹⁸ Please refer to 1.3. Introduction of Concepts for details.

ambitions and regional concerns, shaping their destinies quite independently. This distance also meant that cultural exchange, while present, remained limited, influencing mainly the intellectual, artistic and architectural styles and motifs. Beyond political considerations, the shared Hanafi-Sunni Muslim identity of both imperial dynasties fostered a sense of religious solidarity and cooperation. This shared faith at the level of dynasties provided a common ground for communication and understanding, especially against Portuguese colonialism and Shia rivals like the Safavids.

While an examination of pre-colonial interactions holds value, it risks neglecting intricacies of the relationship in the present day. The details of past trade routes and commodities indeed could provide an informative context; however, a more pertinent approach is to explore whether historical interactions fostered a sense of long-term cultural affinity that transcends religious differences. For instance, highlighting the enduring significance of pilgrimage sites like Mecca and Medina for both Indian and Turkish Muslims could demonstrate a deeper historical connection. Moreover, examining historical examples of tolerance and exchange embodied in the Composite Nationalism ideology that transcends religious boundaries serves as a valuable counterpoint to the potentially divisive nature of Hindutva ideology. Nonetheless, a complete understanding necessitates acknowledging moments where political or religious differences overshadowed shared cultural experiences.

While a comparative analysis of British colonialism in India and Western imperialism in Türkiye during the 19th century could provide valuable insights, it is beyond the scope of this study. However, recognising the historical similarities and differences in the paths of both nations during the peak of colonialism and imperialism is crucial for understanding the current geopolitical context. On account of the annual pilgrimage obligations, Turkish citizens and Indian Muslims had been in touch for centuries. Owing to the advancements in overseas transportation, the frequency and accessibility of this interaction had significantly increased by the end of 19th century which resulted in further strengthening the cultural, religious and even political ties between two regions. Prior to the World War I, the Turkish Empire and the British India were only separated by a thousand kilometres wide sea route or by a modernising Persia ruled by another Turkish dynasty as illustrated in Figure 3.



Figure 3. A Map of the Countries between Constantinople and Calcutta¹⁹

Towards the end of 19th century, Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1909) sought to unite Muslims globally against Western powers driven by Pan-Islamism and the Ottoman Caliphate's prestige. He saw India's vast Muslim population as crucial to this vision. Educational and religious outreach missions were sent, financial aid provided during famines, and political support offered in legal battles against the British, building goodwill and strengthening Islamic identity. Türkiye's entry into World War I in 1914 initially drew support from Indian Muslims, who viewed it as a fight against British imperialism. The Turkish defeat in World War I in 1918 and the threatened dismantling of the Caliphate sparked the Khilafat Movement²⁰ (Niemeijer, 1972, p. 83) in India.

¹⁹ From "A map of the countries between Constantinople and Calcutta: including Turkey in Asia, Persia, Afghanistan and Turkestan" by Stanford (1912). As depicted in this contemporary map of southwest Asia, Türkiye was referred interchangeably as "Turkish Empire" or "Turkey" in English whereas the undivided colonial India was labelled as "British India".

²⁰ According to Niemeijer, the Khilafat Movement's origins can be traced back to a conference held in Lucknow or Delhi in September 1919 (1972, p. 83), while the enthusiasm of its belligerents (1972, p. 149) and the movement's influence as a major factor in Indian politics waned gradually after 1922 (1972, p. 144) and definitively after the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate by the Turkish National Assembly in March

Muslims and Hindus united in a cross-religious anti-colonial struggle, demanding the preservation of the Caliphate (Appadorai, 1981, p. 55; Bulut and Aras, 2023, p. 37). While the movement failed to achieve its goal, it left a significant legacy, influencing future Muslim political movements in India.

Further into modern times, both independent India and the Republic of Türkiye established themselves as secular states while their approaches during the Cold War differed significantly. While Türkiye, under Kemal Atatürk, underwent a national revolution in the 1920s and 30s, embracing secularism and aligning with the West, India chose a different path. Following independence and partition in 1947, India adopted a secular stance but pursued a non-aligned foreign policy. This ideological divergence limited close cooperation during the Cold War. India, as a non-aligned nation, maintained close ties with the Soviet Union; while Türkiye, firmly positioned with the West, joined NATO.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent conclusion of the Cold War ushered in a paradigm shift in international relations. This new era witnessed the emergence of shared concerns, such as terrorism, maritime security, and regional stability, which have fostered novel avenues for cooperation between India and Türkiye. Despite this progress, sensitive issues like the Armenian and Kashmir conflicts remain obstacles, necessitating prudent consideration and nuanced diplomatic engagement. Furthermore, the evolving domestic political landscapes and shifting foreign policy priorities of both nations add layers of complexity to the relationship. Additionally, competition for resources in regions like Turkestan and the Eastern Mediterranean represents a potential source of friction.

The emergence of India and Türkiye as regional powers in today's world has been accompanied by a pursuit of strategic partnerships and a diversification of their respective foreign policies. This shared objective has significantly improved relations between the two nations, particularly in the economic sphere. Although an exponential growth in bilateral trade, from US\$6.2 billion in 2015 to US\$13.81 billion in 2022-23 (MEA, 2023),

1924 (1972, p. 155). The Central Committee of the Khilafat Movement was represented in the Islamic Congress organised by Ibn Saud in Mecca in last month of 1924 as its last significant presence (1972, p. 159).

could be regarded as an indicator of a potential convergence in economic interests, the significant imbalance in the type and value of traded goods and services, with a heavy reliance on raw materials and petroleum (Turkey/India, 2023) highlights areas for further development and diversification.

A comprehensive analysis of the historical context underlying India-Türkiye relations reveals a multidimensional narrative. Analysing this rich context necessitates not only recognising the ancient interconnections, but also acknowledging the ideological divergences that emerged during the period of British colonial rule in India and understanding the distinct paths each nation took towards gaining international recognition after the establishment of the nation states as well as appreciating the opportunities and challenges presented by the post-Cold War world order. Taking these historical elements into account, it remains a question whether India and Türkiye have the potential to forge a path towards a more prosperous and stable future for both nations. Conversely, it may be the case that, despite a shared historical background, the enduring legacy of colonialism in India and divergent pathways towards national identity reconstruction could hinder the development of a more robust partnership. Furthermore, the absence of a foundation of mutual respect and understanding when addressing contemporary challenges has the potential to exacerbate existing tensions and impede cooperation. Accordingly, in order to illuminate this potential tension further, this thesis explores the ideology of Hindutva in contemporary Indian politics. By analysing its influence on foreign policy and international relations, the thesis aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead for India-Türkiye relations.

SCOPE OF THE THESIS

This thesis focuses on the potential impact of Hindutva ideology on contemporary India-Türkiye relations. It explores the historical development of Hindutva, an overview of this ideology and its interaction with other nationalist ideals that emerged during the British colonial rule in India. Then, this thesis will explore the fascinating correlation between Hindutva and Muslim ethnoreligious nationalism, analysing the contrasting ideologies of the Muslim League and the concept of Composite Nationalism associated with Gandhi and the Khilafat Movement. Understanding the ideas about Hindu-Muslim

unity and the subsequent rise of tensions between the secular vision of the INC and the emerging Hindutva ideology is crucial for comprehending the evolution of Hindutva and its lasting impact on Indian politics, exemplified by the assassination of Gandhi in 1948 by a Hindutva extremist. While a comprehensive examination of India's independence in 1947 and the subsequent partition lies beyond the immediate focus of this thesis, their profound impact on national identity and the enduring legacy for both India and Pakistan cannot be understated. However, this thesis will narrow its scope to explore how Hindutva ideology has continued to shape Indian politics and society since independence, analysing its role in the formation of political parties like the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) in 1951 and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1980 as well as its impact on religious minorities and national identity.

The scope of analysing these events in this thesis is confined to the evolution of ethnoreligious nationalism in India, specifically Hindutva, and its influence on contemporary India's foreign policy towards Türkiye. This focused examination allows for a comprehensive understanding of the critical factor shaping the bilateral relationship in the present day, as the relationship between India and Türkiye has undergone a period of significant transformation in recent years. Especially, following the rise of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India (2014) and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Türkiye (2014), the two nations have developed a nuanced relationship marked by both strategic *convergence and divergence*. These key concepts will be defined and elucidated in Chapter 1, with their practical implications examined through detailed case studies in Chapter 5.

While topics such as UN restructuring, with its potential for convergence, may be relevant to India-Türkiye relations, they are not explored in this thesis due to their global nature. Similarly, the well-established conflicts surrounding Pakistan and Kashmir, which have been extensively analysed in existing scholarship, are excluded from this study due to their limited relevance to the primary focus of this research. This study will focus on the new potential areas of both collaboration and friction that are more directly shaped by India's Hindutva-driven foreign policy, particularly in light of both nations' aspirations to become regional powerhouses. These areas include economic cooperation, trade expansion, regional security initiatives, global power dynamics, and counter-terrorism

efforts, as well as differing perspectives on regional connectivity projects and geopolitical issues related to Cyprus and Armenia.

In conclusion, this thesis investigates the impact of Hindutva ideology on the evolving dynamics of strategic convergence and divergence in competition between Modi's India (2014-present) and Erdogan's Türkiye (2014-present). The research problematique arises from India's significant rise as a major global power in the 21st century, which coincides with the growing influence of Hindutva ideology. This ideological shift has the potential to profoundly impact India's foreign policy, particularly towards strategically important nations like Türkiye, a secular Muslim-majority state governed by a type of religious nationalist oriented policy bearing remarkable similarities with its Indian counterpart. Although historical ties and shared strategic interests provide a basis for cooperation, the potential discord between Hindutva and Türkiye's national identity poses a substantial challenge to the future trajectory of this bilateral relationship. Thus, the central **research question** of this thesis is: To what extent does Hindutva, as a form of religious nationalism, shape India's foreign policy towards Türkiye in the post-Modi era (2014-Present)?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature surrounding Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism in India spans various thematic dimensions, reflecting its historical evolution, political ramifications, and contemporary manifestations.

The first theme in the literature is on the history of Hindutva. Ayoob's work (2020) examines the historical antecedents and ideological underpinnings of Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism, tracing its emergence to British colonial historiography, the intellectual contributions of figures like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, and the socio-political aftermath of India's partition in 1947. Bhatt's (2001) work analyses the historical evolution of Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism, challenging perceptions and highlighting its impact on India's political landscape. Ananthamurthy's (2018) manifesto contrasts Hindutva nationalism with Hind Swaraj, offering a creative response to the rise of Hindutva and emphasising its human toll, while Purandare's (2019) biography explores Savarkar's evolution and complex relationship with Gandhi. This historical backdrop sets

the stage for understanding the relationship between Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism and Indian politics.

The second theme in the literature is on the ideological contours and socio-political implications of Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism. Desai (1999) identifies a discernible shift towards authoritarianism within the Indian ruling class, facilitated by the ideological alignment between Hindutva and capitalist interests. Bannerji (2006) and Bajpai et al. (2014) scrutinise the cultural nationalism²¹ propagated by the BJP, which conflates national identity with Hinduism and perpetuates exclusionary narratives marginalising minority groups. Salam's (2018) exploration of Hindutva ideology and Muslim identity contrasts divisive nationalism with the enduring notion of India. Komireddi's (2019) critique highlights India's transformation under Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism, warning against the erosion of democracy and marginalisation of minorities, while Teltumbde's (2020) edited volume delineates Hindutva's theoretical underpinnings and concrete manifestations, offering insights into its assimilation into daily discourse. Longkumer's (2021) ethnography illuminates Hindutva's influence in Northeast India, challenging dismissive attitudes and providing a comprehensive understanding of its engagement with indigenous peoples.

The third theme in the literature is around Modi and his leadership. Marino's (2014) political biography provides a comprehensive exploration of Modi's rise to power, offering insights into his controversial reputation and political ideology. Mahurkar's (2014) examination of Modi's governance in Gujarat offers insights into innovative initiatives and aims to discern the true impact of his leadership. Price's (2015) examination of Modi's electioneering techniques underscores his historic victory, Singh's (2022) exploration of the BJP under Modi's leadership details strategic party-building efforts. Meanwhile, Werleman (2021) unpacks the contemporary manifestations of Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, elucidating its role in fostering Islamophobia and perpetuating socio-political divisions, as Jaffrelot's (2021) examination of Modi's leadership intertwines Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism with national-populism, illustrating the transition towards an ethnic democracy. Complementing these analyses are studies by other scholars which

²¹ Please refer to 1.3. Introduction of Concepts for details.

interrogate Modi's leadership and its implications for Indian foreign policy. Basrur (2017) argues for continuity rather than radical departure in Modi's foreign policy approach, highlighting the pragmatic trajectory that aligns with established strategic imperatives. Miller and Estrada (2017) analyse Modi's procedural pragmatism, wherein traditional and contemporary ideas coalesce to shape foreign policy decisions, reflecting a nuanced understanding of India's geopolitical interests. Tharoor's (2020) examination of Modi highlights parallels with Erdogan and critiques Modi's governance style. Aras (2017) emphasises the economic significance of the "Make in India" initiative, attracting substantial foreign investment.

The fourth theme in the literature is on the role of political communication and media in perpetuating Hindu nationalist narratives. Chatterjee and Das (2021) analyse the construction of historical narratives to legitimise India's international position, underscoring the nexus between elite interests and public discourse. Kumar (2013) examines the portrayal of Muslims in Bollywood cinema as a mechanism for reinforcing Hindu nationalist ideologies, while Waikar (2018) critiques Modi's deployment of Islamophobic rhetoric within the framework of Hindu ethno-religious nationalism. In this scope, scholars like Visweswaran et al. (2009) shed light on the educational dimensions of Hindu ethno-religious nationalism through an exploration of curriculum reforms aimed at promoting Hindu-centric narratives in textbooks revealing the ideological agenda behind the National Curriculum Framework, highlighting its implications for shaping national identity and perpetuating socio-cultural hierarchies. Narayan's (2021) elucidation analyses the RSS's efforts in social reconstruction and its impact on Indian politics.

Another theme in the literature sheds light on to the evolution of Indian diplomacy. Talbott (2004) offers insights into America's negotiations with India and Pakistan on nuclear proliferation, while Singh's (2018) exploration of India's foreign policy challenges popular notions of non-alignment during the Cold War. Nau and Ollapally's (2012) examination of rising powers offers insights into India's foreign policy debates, while Thussu's (2013) exploration of India's soft power underscores its cultural influence and mediated international relations. Teltumbde's (2018) critique traces India's post-Independence trajectory and exposes entrenched power structures perpetuating caste-based exclusion. Aras and Bulut (2023) analyse India's Arctic policy, highlighting

its role in counterbalancing China's influence in the region. Aras and Kandemir offer a series of analyses. They examine the evolution of India's Central Asian policies (2023a), the potential for Central Asia to contribute to European Union energy security (2023b), and the limitations of India's orthodox offensive doctrine (2023c). Additionally, they explore the re-emergence of the Quad as a strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific region, aimed at countering China's expansionist policies (2023d). Finally, Aras (2024) investigates the growing importance of the Indian diaspora in Africa within India's foreign policy, particularly in the context of rising energy demands and China's increasing influence. This study also highlights the role of the European Union in fostering closer ties between India and African countries. Together, these studies provide a comprehensive overview of India's foreign policy strategies, emphasising economic initiatives, regional alliances, and the evolving dynamics in relations with specific regions like Central Asia and Africa.

Finally, it is necessary to present a theme on comparison that is important particularly for the purposes of this study. Bose's (2018) comparative analysis of secularism in India and Türkiye underscores the challenges posed by Sunni-Islamist dominance in Türkiye and Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism in India, emphasising the indispensability of secularism for India's future. Jassal and Turan's (2018) volume explores historical connections between India and Türkiye, initiating cross-cultural conversations and comparative analyses. Peacock and McClary's (2020) exploration of Turkish interactions with India resists simplistic narratives, offering insights into Turkish identity and its nuances in the Indian context. Barkey, Kaviraj, and Naresh's (2021) scholarly examination explores the dynamics between democracy and religious pluralism in India, Pakistan, and Türkiye, establishing a theoretical framework and analysing each country's journey towards modern democratic statehood. Sengupta's (2014) examination critically assesses the Turkish Model, challenging its viability as a developmental alternative. Mohan and Padmanabhan's (2022) analysis of right-wing populist movements explores commonalities and trajectories in India, Türkiye, Russia, and Brazil,

while Palit's (2023) exploration²² of new media's impact on political communication sheds light on changing engagement strategies.

Existing literature has extensively explored the complexities of nationalism in India, the origins of Hindutva, and its socio-political ramifications. Considerable focus has been placed on the BJP and Narendra Modi's influence on Indian politics, often through a critical lens that highlights the reshaping of national identity, exclusionary narratives, and increased societal divisions. This body of work, however, has not comprehensively examined the specific foreign policy dynamic between Modi's BJP and Erdoğan's AK Party in Türkiye.

While the anti-Muslim sentiments rooted in Hindutva ideology are well-documented, there remains a noticeable lack of scholarly inquiry into the association between Turkish identity's historical presence in India and Hindutva's historical narratives within the context of the BJP's foreign policy. Despite the significant historical, cultural, and religious connections between the two nations, the influence of these historical narratives on contemporary foreign policy considerations is a subject that warrants further scholarly attention. This gap in the scholarly literature is particularly notable considering the well-documented anti-Muslim sentiments inherent in Hindutva ideology, which could plausibly influence India's foreign policy decisions towards Muslim-majority nations such as Türkiye. The historical narratives promoted by Hindutva often portray Muslim rulers of Turkish origin and their descendants negatively, potentially impacting foreign policy perspectives and diplomatic relations. However, the existing scholarship has not sufficiently examined how these narratives and sentiments

²² Parama Sinha Palit's work "New Media and Public Diplomacy" exemplifies nationalistic bias within Indian academic discourse through its one-sided portrayal of Türkiye, which contrasts sharply with more balanced scholarly perspectives that could highlight the potential for a robust strategic partnership between India and Türkiye. Palit dismisses Türkiye as "not-free" akin to China (2023, p. 20) and erroneously refers to her as an Arab country (2023, p. 44), overlooking the nuanced realities and strategic opportunities such a partnership presents. Her analysis unfavourably juxtaposes Türkiye against India, particularly under Narendra Modi's leadership, whom she praises for revolutionizing public diplomacy and communication. Notably, she omits any critical reflection on the 2002 Gujarat incidents during Modi's governance while highlighting Türkiye's Gezi Park protests (2023, p. 43).

shape the BJP's foreign policy under Modi, especially towards Türkiye as a nation that officially recognises its historical ties to India.

This thesis is a modest attempt to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring the under-examined relationship between Hindutva ideology and India's foreign policy towards Türkiye. By exploring the intersection of historical narratives, ideological foundations, and contemporary policy decisions, this study seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of how Hindutva may influence India's interactions with Türkiye. It is hoped that this analysis will not only address a potential gap in the current scholarship but also contribute to a broader understanding of the impact of religious nationalism on international relations.

THESIS STRUCTURE

A comprehensive understanding of the intricate relationship between India and Türkiye necessitates a multidimensional approach that incorporates historical context, the evolution of political ideologies, and the shifting dynamics of the global landscape. Disregarding these crucial elements risks misinterpreting the rise of Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism and its potential ramifications for future bilateral relations between the two nations. This introductory chapter lays the groundwork for the subsequent chapters, which will explore specific aspects of this complex relationship.

As stated in the following Chapter 1, "*Theoretical and Conceptual Framework*", this thesis employs a convergence-divergence framework to analyse how shared interests and conflicting ideologies shape international relations, with a particular focus on the influence of religious nationalism on foreign policy. It examines historical and contemporary examples, drawing on diverse theoretical perspectives and case studies to understand how religious identity impacts state behaviour, alliances, conflicts, and the tension between secularism and religious values in international affairs.

Chapter 2, "*Hindutva's Early Influences: Seeds of Reform and Hindu Identity*", underscores the significance of recognising the ideological underpinnings of Hindutva. This includes examining its connections to earlier nationalist movements, its paradoxical alignment with the Muslim League in contrast with the united Indian nationalist front of Gandhi, INC and the proponents of Composite Nationalism formed against British

colonialism, and the evolving interpretations of Hindutva itself. Such an inquiry is essential for comprehending its potential impact on India's approach towards Türkiye, particularly considering both nations' aspirations as rising global powers.

Chapter 3, "*Evolution of Hindutva in Indian Politics: From Fringe to Powerhouse*" studies Hindutva's rise to power in India in order to lay the foundation to understand Hindutva's impact on India's foreign policy, especially towards Türkiye. This chapter will discuss key events, figures, and factors that contributed to its influence in Indian politics. It will also examine the role of the BJP and Hindutva under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Chapter 4, "*Evolution of India's Foreign Policy and Hindutva's Influence*", illustrates that India's foreign policy has evolved through distinct phases since independence, shifting from Nehru's non-alignment to Indira Gandhi's assertiveness, then to post-Cold War economic liberalisation and regional focus, and finally to Modi's Hindutva-influenced approach emphasising economic diplomacy, strategic partnerships, and cultural initiatives. This chapter, then, discusses how India's foreign policy particularly towards Türkiye was shaped in post-independence years.

Chapter 5, "*India and Türkiye in a Strategic Embrace in 21st Century*", analyses the evolving India-Türkiye relationship in the 21st century, focusing on shared and conflicting strategic interests in three main regions: (1) the Indian Ocean Region, (2) the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, and (3) the Landlocked Eurasia. It is through the analysis to be carried out in this chapter that the central research question of this thesis is to be discussed: *To what extent does Hindutva, as a form of religious nationalism, shape India's foreign policy towards Türkiye in the post-Modi era (2014-Present)?* In that framework, this chapter explores the potential for collaboration on energy security, maritime safety, and countering China's influence, as well as challenges like competition in energy, differing priorities, and regional conflicts.

The concluding chapter aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Hindutva ideology and India-Türkiye relations through a critical examination of these interconnected elements. It seeks to illuminate the historical context, ideological shifts, and global ambitions that shape this dynamic partnership, ultimately offering insights into its potential future trajectory.

RESOURCES

This study employs a combination of primary and secondary sources to examine the influence of Hindutva on India's foreign policy towards Türkiye. Primary sources, including writings and speeches by key Indian leaders and official government documents, will be used to explore the historical development and core aspects of Hindutva ideology particularly in the historical analysis. Secondary sources, including scholarly works, newspaper articles, and expert reports, will be employed to analyse contemporary manifestations of Hindutva in India's foreign policy towards Türkiye. Additionally, limited primary sources like official government statements will be incorporated to offer insights into current policy directions. All sources are selected based on their credibility, relevance, and publication in reputable outlets.

This research acknowledges certain limitations. While the use of primary sources offers valuable insights, this thesis will mainly be based on secondary resources. Additionally, the dynamic nature of international relations necessitates ongoing monitoring of future developments in India-Türkiye relations.

CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. CONVERGENCE-DIVERGENCE APPROACH

The ascension and subsequent solidification of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) rule in India has demonstrably reshaped the nation's political landscape. The party's core tenets, which prioritise the advancement of Hindu cultural and political values, raise intriguing questions regarding their potential impact on India's foreign relations, particularly with Türkiye. This section contends that an examination of the convergence-divergence dynamics in strategic alignment of the countries serves as a valuable framework for analysing this relationship.

The convergence-divergence debate examines whether globalisation leads to the homogenisation of societies and economies (convergence) or the persistence and even accentuation of cultural, economic, and political differences (divergence). Meyer et al. (1975) suggest a nuanced perspective, highlighting a global shift towards modernity while acknowledging persistent disparities in development. They argue that both convergence and divergence are shaped by the dynamics of the world system, mirroring earlier debates on the impact of modern industrial society. Building on this, a refined framework can be applied to analyse the relationship between two emerging regional powers such as India and Türkiye. This framework posits that global dynamics, alongside inherent characteristics, influence the interrelationship between these powers. Convergent forces, such as shared economic interests and participation in multilateral institutions, foster cooperation, while divergent forces, rooted in historical legacies and competing geopolitical ambitions, may lead to conflict. This framework, by assessing the relative strength of these opposing forces, offers a comprehensive understanding of the multidimensional interactions between emerging powers, going beyond traditional state-centric analyses.

The convergence-divergence approach centres on the notion that states, driven by shared interests and strategic objectives, may converge in their international behaviour (Brewster, 2010). Conversely, conflicting ideologies and national priorities can lead to divergence in foreign policy stances (Brækhus and Øverland, 2007). This approach

acknowledges the multidimensional nature of international relations, where states navigate both commonalities and differences in pursuit of their national interests. The convergence hypothesis suggests the potential for ideological alignment to translate into strategic cooperation. Brækhus and Øverland's (2007) analysis of the strategic convergence between Russia and China, driven by shared economic and geopolitical interests, exemplifies this concept. Similarly, India and Türkiye could potentially experience convergence if their respective nationalisms translate into a shared vision for regional security or a common stance on issues like counter-terrorism. However, Brewster's (2010) examination of the evolving security relationship between Australia and India highlights the challenges of fostering convergence since even shared interests in Indian Ocean security exist, Australia faces the complexities of balancing these interests with the concerns of littoral states and extra-regional powers.

The applicability of the convergence-divergence approach extends beyond the realm of political ideologies. Gupta and Wang's (2003) exploration of globalisation's influence on strategic business models demonstrates the interplay of convergence and divergence. Globalisation fosters uniformity ("convergence" school) by aligning economic activities, but also allows for diversity ("divergence" school) by acknowledging the enduring influence of national cultures. Similarly, India's Hindu ethnoreligious-nationalist agenda, embedded within its cultural identity, may find parallels or even converge, not in content but in form, with certain aspects of Turkish religious-nationalism that emphasise religious identity alongside cultural heritage and national pride. However, these nationalisms naturally diverge in their specific cultural and religious underpinnings. The divergence hypothesis underscores the potential for ideological differences to create friction in foreign relations. Kalogeraki (2009) argues that distinct cultural heritages shaped by historical, political, and religious events can lead nations on divergent modernisation trajectories, challenging simplistic notions of convergence. India's Hindu religious-nationalist agenda, emphasising a distinct Hindu identity, diverge from Türkiye's equivalent ideology, particularly on issues related to religious minorities or regional spheres of influence. Nuruzzaman's (2022) analysis of the strategic divergences between China and India, rooted in historical tensions and geopolitical competition, highlights how competing nationalisms can hinder cooperation.

The convergence-divergence approach offers a robust analytical framework for dissecting the complex relationship between India's ascendant Hindu religious-nationalism and its foreign policy vis-à-vis Türkiye. This framework facilitates an examination of areas where mutual interests, such as countering China's growing influence, and a shared historical and cultural heritage might foster cooperation. However, the framework also acknowledges the potential for divergence, particularly rooted in the inherent tension between the construction of a distinct Hindu identity within Hindu religious-nationalism downplaying or even demonising the historical presence of Turkish Muslim influence in India. Furthermore, the potential for conflicting geopolitical ambitions must be factored into the equation. As both India and Türkiye assert themselves as regional powerhouses, their strategic calculations and competing visions for the future of geopolitics could further complicate this evolving dynamic.

Both India and Türkiye have concerns about China's growing influence. Convergence could occur if both nations view each other as strategic partners in balancing China's power. S. Singh's (2019) exploration of the Indo-Pacific as a site of strategic convergence between India and the U.S. driven by shared concerns over China's ambitions, offers a parallel for potential Indo-Turkish cooperation on this issue. However, despite shared concerns about China's rise, significant challenges remain in establishing a unified approach or even a cooperative framework, primarily due to historical mistrust, competing geopolitical interests, and differing interpretations of the Indo-Pacific region itself.

Köllner, Sil, and Ahram's (2018) emphasis on the importance of identifying convergences across regions through Comparative Area Studies (CAS) highlights the value of exploring these historical and cultural connections within the convergence-divergence framework. Examining the India-Türkiye relationship through the lens of historical narratives and geopolitical aspirations reveals potential areas of divergence. The rise of Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism in India, emphasising a distinct Hindu identity, could create tensions with Türkiye's emphasis on its historical influence in the region. This echoes Duric and Lansford's (2017) convergence-divergence analysis of US-Russia, where historical baggage can complicate contemporary ties. Additionally, both India and Türkiye harbour ambitions of becoming regional powers, potentially leading to competition in strategically significant areas like Turkestan with its historical connection

to Türkiye, incipient Euro-Pacific connectivity corridors, and resource-rich East Africa with its critical maritime chokepoints. This dynamic mirrors Menon's (1997) observation of the Sino-Russian relationship, where despite past antagonism, strategic competition can arise due to overlapping interests. Recognising these potential fault lines is crucial for India and Türkiye to foster a more constructive partnership, prioritising shared interests over historical narratives, similar to the evolving Sino-Russian relationship.

The convergence-divergence approach offers a valuable framework for dissecting the complexities of the India-Türkiye relationship. As an inspiring geopolitical case, Everts (2001) explores ideological divergences in US-European foreign policy, highlighting their impact on cooperation. This parallels how Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism's ideological underpinnings could influence India's relationship with Türkiye. Conversely, Scott's (2012) analysis of the Indo-Pacific framework fostering convergence between India and the US, despite geographical differences, demonstrates how shared economic and security concerns can bridge divides resulting from past "estrangement" (Scott, 2012, p. 97). Applying these insights to India and Türkiye allows researchers to grasp how convergence and divergence can be driven by both ideology and strategic considerations. This approach fosters an understanding of how India's historical political landscape, particularly the rise of Hindu religious-nationalism, might shape its foreign policy towards Türkiye. Then both the potential for alignment and areas prone to friction could be assessed.

1.2. RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM AND FOREIGN POLICY

The resurgence of religious nationalism in recent decades has cast a long shadow over international relations, challenging the secular ideals that underpinned the post-Westphalian order. Defined as the alignment of religious belief with national identity, religious nationalism increasingly transcends the private sphere to profoundly impact a state's foreign policy and interactions with other nations. It posits a shared religious identity as the cornerstone of national character, often accompanied by a sense of moral superiority and a mission to propagate its religious values domestically and internationally (Friedland, 2001, p. 126; Guth, 2020, p. 80). This phenomenon, once relegated to the fringes of political discourse, has increasingly gained traction, shaping the foreign policy calculus of numerous countries.

This section explores the theoretical underpinnings of this phenomenon, asking a critical question: How does religious nationalism impact foreign relations? Does it foster a sense of solidarity with co-religionists abroad, leading to strategic alliances and interventions? Alternatively, does it exacerbate tensions with states adhering to different faiths, potentially leading to conflict?

To understand the contemporary influence of religious nationalism, we must first explore its historical roots. Looking at the imperial age, “a communal system, known as the ‘millet’ system, in which non-Muslim communities established self-rule” in Ottoman Türkiye, for example, demonstrates how religious identity can be woven into the very fabric of state structures while fostering a degree of religious tolerance within the empire (Kayaoglu, 2011, p. 117). This inherent entanglement, however, also carries the potential for future tensions. Conversely, the Peace of Westphalia (1648), established following the devastating religious wars in Europe, marked a fundamental moment in the development of state sovereignty and the separation of religious and political authority (Philpott, 2007, p. 45). This ushered in an era where the nation-state, not religious affiliation, became the primary unit of international relations.

Meanwhile, the Enlightenment and humanist movements of the 18th century, which challenged traditional religious authority and promoted secular governance, laid the groundwork for a new tension (Toulmin, 1992, p. 141). The French Revolution introduced a form of ‘irreligious nationalism’, where the state sought to replace traditional religious affiliations with a civic, revolutionary nationalism based on secular ideals; nonetheless “born out of” and “shaped by the heritage of Christianity” (Bell, 2009, pp. 7-8). As Bell (2009, p. 24) rightly claims, “nationalism in France, at least, cannot begin to be understood properly without reference to religion”. The revolutionary fervour of the French influenced subsequent nationalist movements across Europe, including the Italian unification efforts led by figures like Garibaldi and Mazzini, who blended revolutionary nationalism with appeals to religious identity (Smith, 1991, p. 88).

The establishment of nation-states based on ethnoreligious sections of faith in the European regions of the Ottoman Türkiye during the 19th and early 20th centuries further exemplifies the entanglement of religious identity with nationalist aspirations. The *millet* system in classical times classified the population of the Empire into overarching

religious communities: Muslim, Roman (*Rûm*, i.e. Eastern Orthodox), Armenian and Jewish. However, the rising desire for nation-states also led to the development of national churches within the Eastern Orthodox community. The dissolution of multi-national empires such as Türkiye and Austro-Hungaria led to the carving out of homogenised nation-states along ethno-religious fault lines, often intensifying tensions and conflicts rooted in religious differences. The deportation of Armenians in 1915 and the population exchange between the Turkish and Greek nation-states in 1923 following World War I underscore the destructive potential of religious nationalism when wielded by state actors to consolidate power and enforce homogeneity. Similarly, in the Indian context, the rise of Hindutva and Muslim nationalism served to hinder united Indian nationalist resistance against British colonial rule, culminating in the partition of India along religious lines in 1947 (Jaffrelot, 1996, p. 135).

These historical examples illustrate the multidimensional nature of religious nationalism. It may be a unifying force among populations of the same religion, fostering a sense of shared identity and purpose. However, it may also be a divisive force, instrumentalised by state actors to pursue political agendas and incite conflict. Given this complex history, it is now time to turn to the core focus which is understanding how religious nationalism shapes contemporary foreign relations. By examining the convergence-divergence debate and analysing specific foreign policy goals, this study aims to illuminate the multidimensional relationship between a state's religious identity and its actions on the global stage.

The rich literature of international relations theory provides many diverse insights into the complicated relationship between religion and foreign policy. For instance, liberal scholars like John Rawls, in his seminal work "A Theory of Justice" (1973), emphasises the importance of liberal principles, particularly tolerance and respect for human rights, in fostering peaceful coexistence between states with diverse religious identities. Conversely, realists, as exemplified by Kenneth Waltz's "Theory of International Politics" (1979), argue that national interests, often rooted in realpolitik calculations of security and economics, are the primary drivers of foreign policy, irrespective of a state's religious makeup. While a comprehensive examination of these contrasting viewpoints would undoubtedly enrich our understanding of how religious nationalism interacts with established theoretical frameworks in international relations, it

would necessitate a more expansive investigation. Therefore, for the purposes of this focused analysis, this thesis will focus on the direct influence of religious nationalism on the formulation and execution of specific foreign policy goals. This approach allows for the isolation of the unique impact of religious ideology on a state's interactions with the international community.

The resurgence of religion as a significant factor in international relations has gained increasing recognition among scholars and practitioners. As Sandal and Fox (2013) note, events like the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the September 11 attacks in 2001, and the rise of religious political parties worldwide have highlighted religion's heightened international profile. This renewed focus challenges the traditionally secular bias of international relations scholarship, prompting a re-evaluation of the discipline's theoretical frameworks. Scholars such as Petito and Hatzopoulos (2003), Rengger (2003), Robertson (2011), and Fox (2003) emphasise the historical neglect of religion in international relations, primarily due to Western-centric perspectives and the assumption of secularisation. This neglect is now being addressed through comprehensive analyses of religion's role in conflict, identity, transnational movements, soft power dynamics, and foreign policy decisions (Fox and Sandler, 2004; Haynes, 2008; Sandal and James, 2011; Sheikh, 2012). Furthermore, the works of Haynes (2010) and Wilson (2014) underscore the importance of understanding religion's persistent and evolving influence in shaping global politics, particularly in the context of contemporary political landscapes and post-secular societies.

Ultimately, this thesis undertakes a multidimensional examination of religious nationalism to explain its influence on contemporary foreign relations. We will trace the historical evolution of this concept, from its early expressions within empires to its modern-day manifestations. By utilising the convergence-divergence approach to international relations, we can assess the potential of religious nationalism to foster cooperation, i.e. convergence, or ignite conflict, i.e. divergence.

1.2.1. Cases of Religious Nationalism in the World

There are many different cases of religious nationalism impacting foreign policy in various countries around the world. Evangelical Neo-Con nationalism in the United States combines religious conservatism with foreign policy objectives, influenced by

Christian beliefs and American exceptionalism. Evangelical support for Israel, based on biblical interpretations and geopolitical alliances, has shaped U.S. policies in the Middle East, particularly concerning Israeli-Palestinian relations and broader regional stability. This ideological alignment underscores the role of religious nationalism in shaping U.S. interventions and global diplomatic strategies (Wilcox and Larson, 2006; Hendershot, 2010).

Orthodox Christian nationalism in Russia has gained prominence under President Vladimir Putin, asserting Russia's role as a defender of Orthodox Christian values domestically and internationally. This ideology influences Russia's policies towards former Soviet states with significant Orthodox populations, such as Ukraine and Belarus. Russia's support for Orthodox communities in conflict zones like Syria and its cultural diplomacy in Eastern Europe illustrate how religious nationalism informs its geopolitical strategy and international engagements (Sakwa, 2017; Tsygankov, 2009).

Iran's Islamic nationalism emerged prominently after the 1979 Islamic Revolution, which overthrew the Shah and established an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Khomeini. The revolution transformed Iran's foreign policy, emphasising Shia Islam as a central identity marker and promoting, even exporting, Islamic governance regionally. Iran's support for Shia communities in Iraq, Lebanon, and Yemen reflects its revolutionary ideology, influencing regional dynamics and challenging Sunni-majority states. This Islamic nationalism shapes Iran's geopolitical strategy, impacting its relations with both Muslim and non-Muslim nations (Mabon, 2016; Alfoneh, 2008).

Zionism, the nationalist movement advocating for the establishment of a Jewish state in historic Palestine, forms the cornerstone of Israel's foreign policy and regional strategy. Rooted in historical claims to the land and Jewish religious identity, Zionism influences Israel's approach to conflicts with Palestinian territories and neighbouring Arab states. The alliance with the United States, often framed in terms of shared Judeo-Christian values and security concerns, underscores the intersection of religious nationalism with Israel's diplomatic initiatives in the Middle East (Shindler, 2002).

Türkiye's secular Kemalist ideology has evolved under President Erdogan's leadership towards a form of Sunni Muslim nationalism which also encompasses what is called the "Turkish-Islamic synthesis." Emphasising Turkish identity rooted in Sunni

Islam, this ideology influences Türkiye's foreign policy, particularly in relation to its neighbours and the broader Muslim world. Türkiye's involvement in Syria, its stance on Kurdish autonomy in northern Iraq and Syria, and its aspirations for regional leadership reflect the intersection of religious nationalism with geopolitical ambitions, shaping its diplomatic engagements in the Middle East and beyond (Öniş and Yılmaz, 2015; Yavuz, 2019).

Finally, Hindutva ideology, championed by the BJP and other Hindu nationalist groups, has significantly influenced India's foreign policy and regional relations. Originating in the early 20th century, Hindutva emphasises India's identity as a Hindu nation, asserting historical and cultural continuity with ancient India. This ideology impacts India's stance on regional issues, particularly its relations with Pakistan. The nuclearisation of South Asia and India's strategic alliances with Hindu-majority countries like Nepal and Bhutan reflect the influence of Hindutva on security and diplomatic policies (Jaffrelot, 2011; Ganguly, 2003).

The analysis of case studies could further illustrate the diverse manifestations of religious nationalism in foreign policy. From Evangelical Neo-Con nationalism in the United States to Hindutva in India, each case study reveals unique intersections of religious identity, historical narratives, and geopolitical ambitions. These examples underscore the significance of religious nationalism as a driver of state behaviour, shaping regional dynamics and international relations in profound ways. Exploring various theoretical perspectives serves to understand how religious nationalism shapes state behaviour on the international stage. By analysing key debates, prominent thinkers, and compelling case studies, several critical insights into the theoretical underpinnings of this phenomenon and its implications for international relations could be identified.

1.2.2. Theoretical Approaches

Various scholars have contributed to our understanding of the intricate relationship between religion, nationalism, and foreign relations, offering diverse perspectives and theoretical frameworks. This section investigates the key insights provided by scholars like Juergensmeyer (1993), Barr (2010), Haynes (2008, 2010, 2013), and others, examining how religion shapes national identities, influences foreign policy decisions, and impacts international relations. Their approach provides valuable

perspective on the case of Hindutva in India and its potential ramifications for relations with Türkiye.

Religious nationalism intertwines national identity with religious ideology, leveraging symbols, narratives, and traditions to assert national sovereignty and cultural uniqueness in the international arena. Scholars like Anthony D. Smith (1991), who represents the ethno-symbolist school in nationalism studies, and the famous anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1993), who represents the primordialist school, emphasise the deep-rooted historical and cultural continuities that shape collective memories and national narratives, with religious practices and symbolism playing a crucial role in defining national identities. This is also evident in how Hindutva manipulates ancient Hindu texts and traditions to construct a distinct modern national identity in spite of the efforts made by the founding fathers of the independent India.

The theoretical frameworks proposed by scholars based in the modernist school such as Gellner (1983), Anderson (1983), and Wendt (1999) provide further insights into the emergence and transformation of nationalism. Gellner, while acknowledging that religion can be incorporated as a unifying symbol, primarily views nationalism as a secular phenomenon arising in response to industrialisation and modernisation, where standardised, homogenous cultures are necessary for societal integration. Gellner's emphasis on industrialisation and modernisation offers a framework for understanding the political evolution of a previously marginalised Hindutva ideology rise to power. Initially leveraging the traditional religious symbolisms and spearheading the exploitation of ethnoreligious sensitivities, during its political course in post-colonial India, Hindutva has adapted to the modern context to mobilise support and maintain social cohesion. Meanwhile, Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" explains how Hindutva utilises communication technologies and shared narratives to create a sense of Hindu national identity, both within India and among the diaspora. On the other hand, Wendt's constructivist approach emphasises the dynamic nature of identities, including religious ones, as they evolve through social processes and interactions within the international system. This suggests that India's national identity, influenced by Hindutva, can further evolve and transform through interactions with other nations, including Türkiye which became more prominent in the global stage.

The rise of religious nationalism is often attributed to various socio-political factors. Anthony Marx (2002) suggests that it can be a response to internal socio-economic disparities, cultural marginalisation, and historical grievances. Mahmood Mamdani (2004) further explores how colonial legacies and Western interventions have politicised religious identities, shaping religious nationalism in post-colonial contexts. These factors undeniably have contributed to the rise of Hindutva as a powerful political force in India. As to be discussed in Chapter 2, British colonialism has had an everlasting impact upon the formation of all forms of ethno-religious nationalism in colonial and post-colonial India.

Religious nationalism significantly influences foreign policy decisions, shaping diplomatic strategies, alliances, and international interactions. States characterised by religious nationalism often prioritise alliances with co-religionist states or communities, as seen in Israel's foreign policy (Chiriyankandath, 2007; Blarel, 2014). Conversely, religious nationalism can exacerbate conflicts with states adhering to different religious traditions or secular ideologies, as exemplified by the rivalry between Saudi Arabia, which claims to be the leader of the Sunni Muslim world, and Iran, which claims to be that of the Shia Muslim world (Bronson, 2007). Accordingly, although the Hindutva ideology's influence on India's foreign policy has the potential to impact its relations with Türkiye which developed its own unique brand of religious nationalism, there could be areas of both convergence and divergence in their foreign policy approaches.

Barr (2010) challenges the traditional view of religious nationalism as solely associated with conflict, advocating for its understanding as a routine element in shaping national identity, even within peaceful societies. He proposes examining religious nationalism through the lens of hegemony, where elites strive to establish their religious values as dominant. This approach offers a more nuanced understanding of how religion influences national identity and foreign relations. For instance, in the context of India, Hindutva's impact can be seen not only as a potential source of conflict but also as a fundamental factor shaping India's national identity and its interactions with countries like Türkiye. By acknowledging the multidimensional role of religious nationalism, Barr's framework enables us to analyse how the emphasis on Hindu values within Hindutva can lead to both competition and potential cooperation with Türkiye on various international issues. This perspective also highlights the concept of hegemony, as India,

under Hindutva's influence, might seek to assert its cultural and political dominance in the region, thus potentially impacting its relationship with Türkiye.

1.3. INTRODUCTION OF CONCEPTS

A comprehensive analysis of Hindu nationalism and its strategic relationship with Türkiye necessitates a strong foundation built upon clearly defined concepts. The first set of concepts to be introduced in this section relates to the core notions of nationalism. In order to accurately characterise Hindu nationalism, it is crucial to distinguish between different forms of nationalism, such as civic, cultural, and ethno-religious nationalism. This conceptual clarity is essential for understanding the ideology's potential implications for domestic and foreign policy. Furthermore, the thesis would benefit from a nuanced discussion of the concept of "nation". While the modern nation-state is a relatively recent phenomenon, the idea of a shared cultural and historical identity has deeper roots. This historical perspective can provide valuable insights into the evolution of Hindu nationalism and its appeal to a broader audience. The second set of concepts focuses on decolonising the geopolitical framework within the field of Area Studies. Employing terms such as "Afroeurasia", "Turkestan", "Turkish peoples", and "Turkish Empire" instead of more conventional labels like "Asia", "Central Asia", "Turkic peoples", and "Ottoman Empire" is a deliberate choice reflecting a specific analytical approach. By emphasising the interconnectedness of regions and the continuity of historical processes, these terms contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between India and Turkey.

Civic nationalism is closely aligned with the modernist school of nationalism studies. With its emphasis on the importance of citizenship, individual rights, and democratic participation, this form of nationalism is based on rational principles, modern political institutions and an industrial society; rather than shared ethnicity, culture, religion or language in contrast to ethnic or ethnoreligious nationalism.

Ethno-religious nationalism refers to the definition of nation based on shared ethnic and religious characteristics. It often does equate religious identity with ethnic identity, just as in the case of Hindu and Muslim identities in pre-Partition India, reinforcing the idea of a homogeneous, exclusive nation state relying on the primordial

theoretical framework suggesting that national identities are given, not constructed. The Protestant Reformation and the subsequent Thirty Years War in Europe, as well as the Balkanisation of the Turkish Empire can be analysed in this scope. These processes saw the emergence of nation-states defined largely by ethnoreligious lines. The establishment of these states often involved the forced displacement and persecution of religious minorities, a pattern that would be tragically repeated in later centuries.

Communalism is an important concept that is commonly used in the context of India, referring to the politics of antagonising different communities against one another, such as Hindus and Muslims. In intensifying the communal tensions in India, British colonial administration played an essential role. Their “divide and rule” policy to weaken the collective resistance and maintain the colonial domination utilised the religious, caste, and regional divisions, while supporting the weaker political figures against the stronger ones. The colonial regime consciously encouraged the communal divisions to weaken the growing Indian anti-imperialist anti-colonialist nationalist movement. For instance, the introduction of separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims in the early 20th century contributed greatly to the polarisation of the communities and allowed the colonial administration to play further on the religious sentiments. Both the Muslim League and Hindu *Mahasabha*, although claiming to represent different religious communities, share a common root in communalism. By prioritising ethnoreligious identity over national unity, they contributed to the fragmentation of Indian society and left enduring divisions across the sub-continent.

Religious Pluralism is the concept that encourages the peaceful coexistence of multiple religions within a society, acknowledging the diversity of religious beliefs and practices and promoting tolerance, respect, and empathy among different religious groups. In essence, religious pluralism rejects the idea of religious superiority or exclusivity and instead promotes a pluralistic worldview where different religions can contribute to the richness of human experience.

Composite nationalism (Shared Patriotism²³ or United National Identity), an important ideology in pre-Partition India, envisioned India as a nation composed of diverse religious, cultural, and linguistic groups coexisting harmoniously. Emphasising

²³ *Mushtareka Wataniyat*, in Urdu.

unity in diversity and rejecting the idea of a single dominant culture or religion in pre-Partition India, this concept was as a counterpoint to the communal politics and the subsequent Partition. Religious pluralism was an essential point in the united resistance against British colonialism in India. Figures like Bipin Chandra Pal, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, from non-Muslim Indian communities, also championed the principles of Composite (Shared or United) Patriotism or Nationalism to promote national unity and independence among Hindus and Muslims in British India. While Gandhi and Nehru had differing views on the extent of secularism, both recognised the importance of accommodating diverse religious and cultural identities within a unified Indian nation. The Jamiat Ulama-i Hind (JUH) (i.e. Council of Indian Muslim Theologians), a prominent Muslim organisation established in 1919 within the Deobandi school of thought in India, was unique in advocating for composite nationalism based on Islamic sources. Maulana Madani's book, *Composite Nationalism and Islam*²⁴, presented an argument for the authenticity of this ideology within Islamic teachings (Latif and Afsar, 2020). Advocated by prominent members in the highest echelons of the Indian Muslim community, i.e. religious scholars (ulama) and aristocrats such as Maulana H.B. Madani (Ayoob, 2020, p. 418), Maulana Azad (Ayoob, 2020, p. 418; Azad, 2017, pp. 237-240; Niemeijer, 1972, pp. 10, 168), Allah-Baksh Soomro (Salam, 2018, pp. 150-5), and Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Latif and Afsar, 2020, p. 184) etc., Composite Nationalism imagined a united India where not only Hindus and Muslims; but also all communities could coexist harmoniously.

Two-Nation Theory was a political concept employed primarily by Muhammad Ali Jinnah, leader of the Muslim League, as well as Hindutva leaders like V. D. Savarkar, claiming that Hindus and Muslims in British India were two separate nations with fundamentally different cultures, religions, and political aspirations. Proponents of this theory argued that Hindus and Muslims could not coexist peacefully in a single state; thus, they should have their own nation-states. This led to the demand for a separate Muslim homeland, Pakistan, which was eventually realised in 1947 with the partition of India.

²⁴ *Muttahidda Qawmiyyat awr Islam*, in Urdu, literally translates as United National Identity and Islam.

Hindutva political ideology defines India as a Hindu nation (i.e. *Hindu Rashtra*) emphasising the cultural and religious unity of Hindus while seeking to establish Hinduism as the dominant force in Indian society and politics. The Hindu nationalist ideology emerged as a “powerful counter-narrative” and an “antidote” to Composite Nationalism (Ahmed, 2021, pp. 4, 6, 7). The term, Hindutva, defining the Hindu ethnoreligious nationalist ideology literally translates to *Hinduness* and signifies the essence or quality of being a Hindu. The term “Hindutva” was first coined in the early 1920s by Savarkar.

Majoritarianism, a core tenet of Hindutva, denotes the marginalisation and disenfranchisement religious minorities, particularly Muslims by privileging the Hindu majority. The assertion of a monolithic Hindu identity, frequently at the expense of India’s pluralistic ethos, has led to a rise in religious polarisation. This has been manifested in various forms, including discriminatory policies, hate speech, and instances of violence against minority communities which pose threats India’s secular democratic foundations. While it may appear to be a mass movement, Hindutva is primarily rooted in Brahminism and primarily serves to the interests of the upper and middle classes. Despite its claims of representing the majority, Hindutva’s relations with the lower castes, particularly Dalits, has historically been debatable. This reveals the inherently elitist nature of the ideology, challenging the notion that it is a “majoritarian” movement.

Cultural nationalism, a term used by some scholars interchangeably with Hindutva, has emerged as a prominent force in Indian politics, emphasising Hindu culture, identity and heritage as central to the national identity. This ideology promotes Hindu pride and a unified national identity, often by constructing Pakistan and its Muslim population as the “other.” The rise of cultural nationalism has coincided with the political ascendancy of parties and groups espousing this ideology, amplifying its influence on policy and strategic decisions. While it has contributed to a more assertive foreign policy, particularly towards Pakistan, it also raises concerns about minority marginalisation and communal tensions (Bajpai et al., 2014, pp. 287, 290, 299).

Civilisationalism is a concept that posits civilisations as the fundamental units of historical and cultural analysis, often implying a hierarchy of civilisations. Hindutva and civilisationalism are often intertwined. Defining India as a Hindu nation, Hindutva

frequently employs civilisationalist arguments to justify its worldview. Hindutva proponents often argue that India is not merely a nation-state but a timeless civilisation with a unique and superior cultural heritage. Beneath this concept lays an implicit or even explicit hierarchy of civilisations where the Hindu civilisation is placed at the apex. This perspective asserts that the Hindu civilisation is at the core of Indian national identity and that the idea of nation should be organised around this core.

The *saffron* metaphor for Hindu nationalism is derived from the saffron-coloured robes worn by Hindu ascetics and monks. Saffron, a vibrant orange-yellow hue, holds deep religious and cultural significance in Hinduism. It is associated with sacrifice, renunciation, and spiritual purity. The use of saffron as a symbol of Hindu nationalism emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Salam, 2018, p. 36), as Hindu nationalist movements sought to create a distinct identity for Hindus and mobilise them politically. The *Bhagwa Dhwaj*, i.e. Saffron Flag, as the “guru” of the RSS (Zavos, 2000, p. 191; Bhatt, 2001, p. 180), often adorned with religious symbols like the *Om* or the *swastika*, became a potent symbol of Hindu identity and pride. The saffron metaphor gained further prominence during the rise of Hindutva, which seeks to establish India as a Hindu nation-state. The BJP has adopted saffron as its official colour, further solidifying its association with Hindu nationalism (Andersen and Damle, 1987; Wirsing and Mukherjee, 1995; Teltumbde, 2014, p. 11). Neologisms such as “saffronisation” and “saffronise” refer to the implementation of Hindu nationalist policies and agendas in various aspects of Indian society, often with the goal of promoting Hindu values and beliefs, and is often viewed with controversy due to its perceived impact on secularism and religious tolerance (Jaffrelot, 2021, pp. 171, 229, 445, 454; Teltumbde, 2014, p. 11; Anderson and Longkumer, 2018, p. 376 etc.). The rise of Hindu nationalism in India’s political landscape, is also described as the “saffron surge” as the surge signifying a rapid gain in power or influence. References to a “saffron surge” appear as early as 1991 to describe the BJP’s landslide win in Gujarat (Kumar, 1991, p. 72). Bharatiya Janwadi Aghadi (i.e. Indian People’s Front) (1993) and Wirsing and Mukherjee (1995) are also among some of the earliest academic references to the phrase.

Having introduced some foundational nationalist concepts related to India, the specific geographical and regional terms used in this thesis will be addressed. These terms

have been chosen with care to give a more detailed and accurate understanding of the geopolitical context in which India and Türkiye operate.

Afroeurasia, a term denoting the contiguous landmass of Africa, Asia, and Europe, represents the Earth's most extensive landmass, encompassing more than a half of the global land area. This supercontinent, formed through tectonic plate convergence, houses approximately 86% of world population. Often referred to as the "Old World" in contrast to the Americas and Oceania, Afroeurasia offers a unique lens for examining interconnected historical narratives, large-scale ecological zones, and transcontinental migration patterns.

The historical term "*Turkestan*" is employed strategically in this thesis in place of the more geographically neutral designation "Central Asia". This deliberate choice underscores the shared historical legacy of Türkiye and India, encompassing the vast Afroeurasian heartland extending from the Caspian Sea to eastern China. The adoption of "Turkestan" serves to illuminate the profound historical connections that transcend contemporary geographical labels. While the term "Central Asia" is widely used, it is a relatively recent construct with limited historical and cultural depth. In contrast, "Turkestan" is a historically rooted term that encapsulates the region's unique cultural, linguistic, and ethnic heritage, predominantly shaped by Turkic speaking peoples. The term "Turkestan" evokes a shared identity and historical continuity that transcends national borders, reflecting the region's vibrant past and diverse traditions. In scholarly discourse, employing "Turkestan" when referencing the region is not only more accurate; but also demonstrates cultural sensitivity and respect for the region's complex identity. By recognising the distinct character of Turkestan, a deeper understanding of its historical, cultural, and geopolitical significance can be achieved. It is also worth noting that both Türkiye and India have been shaped by migrations from the Turkestan region. While Turkic-speaking peoples migrated westward from Turkestan, shaping the ethnolinguistic structure of Asia Minor, eastward migrations from the same region are believed to have introduced Indo-European languages to the Indian subcontinent (Visweswaran et al., 2009, p. 107), suggesting a historical convergence in migration patterns that contributed to the modern status of both Türkiye and India. Dynasties which trace their origins to this region left their mark on both Türkiye and India. The Silk Road,

flourishing for centuries in Turkestan, fostered trade and cultural exchange. Today, the region retains strategic importance for energy resources and potential trade route revival.

The region encompassing Turkestan and the South Caucasus can be analysed within the broader context of *Landlocked Eurasia*, as a key region within Afroeurasia. This concept closely aligns with Mackinder's (1904) Pivot Area, both emphasising the strategic importance of this central Eurasian region due to its location, resources, and natural barriers. While Mackinder's theory primarily focused on Eurasia, Landlocked Eurasia offers a more comprehensive perspective, acknowledging the broader geopolitical landscape of Afroeurasia. This broader perspective, which denotes the heartland of Afroeurasia as centred on Türkiye bridging the Eastern Mediterranean, Mesopotamia and the Southern Caucasus with Europe, provides valuable insights for geostrategic analysis.

In conclusion, the theoretical framework of religious nationalism offers a robust lens for analysing India's Hindutva-driven foreign policy towards Türkiye. By integrating primordialist, modernist, and constructivist perspectives, we gain a thorough understanding of how religious ideologies shape national identities and influence international relations. Primordialist views highlight the deep-rooted historical narratives and ethno-religious symbols that inform India's perception of Türkiye, while modernist theories contextualise the rise of Hindutva within India's socio-political transformations. Constructivist insights emphasise the dynamic nature of these identities and how they are shaped by ongoing interactions on the global stage.

Longitudinal studies tracking the evolution of Hindutva and its impact on foreign policy provide critical insights into the adaptability and resilience of religious nationalism. Understanding how Hindutva has evolved in response to domestic and global changes can help anticipate future trends and their implications for India-Türkiye relations and broader regional dynamics. Recognising the socio-political complexities of India's religious nationalism and its impact on foreign policy may lead to the development of more effective diplomatic strategies that accommodate religious diversity while fostering inclusive national identities and international cooperation, ultimately contributing to peace and stability in the region.

In summary, the theoretical framework on religious nationalism offers a comprehensive understanding of how religious identities shape state behaviour in international relations. Continued scholarly inquiry and interdisciplinary collaboration are essential for advancing our knowledge and addressing the challenges and opportunities posed by religious nationalism in the 21st century. By examining the case of Hindutva and its influence on Indian foreign policy, we can gain valuable insights into the geopolitical and strategic implications of religious nationalism in the contemporary world.



CHAPTER 2: HINDUTVA'S EARLY INFLUENCES: SEEDS OF REFORM AND HINDU IDENTITY

This chapter provides a critical analysis of *Hindutva*, which literally means Hindu-ness or the essence of being Hindu, that has significantly impacted Indian politics. It explores the historical context and philosophical underpinnings of Hindutva, tracing its development from its 19th century roots in the reform movements to its contemporary manifestation in the of *Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)* government under Narendra Modi's leadership. In order to provide further understanding of this complex historical period, this chapter examines the factors that fuelled discontent against British rule in India, including social restructuring, economic grievances, and cultural awakenings. It also explores the emergence of pan-Indian consciousness, the role of intellectuals and regional movements in shaping national identity, and the diverse ideological spectrum within Indian nationalism. Additionally, the chapter acknowledges the concurrent rise of Hindutva ideology during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

2.1. EMERGENCE OF HINDU NATIONALISM IN 19TH CENTURY: BRAHMO SAMAJ AND ARYA SAMAJ

The 19th century witnessed a surge of social reform movements and the nascent articulation of a national identity in India. This section explores how two prominent movements, Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj, took contrasting approaches that ultimately sowed the seeds for both internal reform within Hinduism and an emerging consciousness of a distinct Hindu heritage.

Founded in 1828 by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, *Brahmo Samaj*²⁵ emerged as a reformist movement with a complex relationship with British colonialism and advocated

²⁵ "Brahmo Samaj" is a term from the Sanskrit language. "Brahmo" refers to Brahman, the ultimate reality or universal spirit in Hindu philosophy, and "Samaj" means society or community. Therefore, Brahmo Samaj translates to "Society of Brahman" or "Community of God." It was a monotheistic reformist Hindu religious movement that emerged during the Bengal Renaissance in the 19th century. The Brahmo Samaj sought to purify Hinduism of its perceived superstitions and rituals, emphasizing a more rational and universal understanding of God.

for social reforms within Hinduism while promoting a unified Indian identity. The early 19th century in India under the Company Raj was a period ripe for reform. Deep-seated societal inequalities, oppressive practices, and outdated customs called for change. Rammohan Roy, a scholar and social reformer, emerged as a prominent figure during this time. His fluency in multiple languages, including Sanskrit, Persian, and English, enabled him to bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and modern ideas. Roy championed women's rights, advocated for fairer treatment of peasants, and criticised the excesses of the caste system. Through the Brahmo Samaj movement, he sought to purify Hinduism of superstitions and rituals. His defiance of societal norms, such as traveling to England in 1830 despite the taboo against crossing the seas, marked a significant step in connecting India with the Western world. Roy's reformist zeal inspired a generation of young Bengalis known as "Young Bengal," who questioned traditional Hindu practices and embraced Western ideals (Heehs, 1998, pp. 34-40). While Roy saw some positive aspects in British presence, he vehemently condemned social evils within Hinduism. Practices like *sati*, the immolation of widows on their husbands' funeral pyres, were fiercely contested. Brahmo Samaj championed women's education and a return to what they perceived as a purer form of Hinduism, one emphasising a monotheistic God and a direct relationship between the individual and the divine. This vision drew inspiration from the Upanishads²⁶, a set of late Vedic texts. Roy's emphasis on a Vedic "golden age" became a core principle of Brahmo Samaj, fostering a sense of pride in India's ancient past (Jaffrelot, 2007, p. 7).

In contrast, *Arya Samaj*²⁷, founded by Dayananda Saraswati in 1875, adopted a more assertive approach. Saraswati built upon the intellectual legacy of Roy and Sen, but

²⁶ Upanishads are the ancient Sanskrit texts that form the philosophical core of Hinduism exploring the concepts like *Brahman* (i.e. the ultimate reality), *Atman* (i.e. the individual self), and the interconnectedness of all existence, hold deep spiritual significance within Hinduism (Narayanan et al., 2024).

²⁷ The Sanskrit term "Arya Samaj" translates to "Society of Nobles." As "Arya" means "noble" or "excellent" in its Vedic context, its potential connection to 19th-century European Aryan racism cannot be ignored. During that time, European scholars misappropriated "Aryan" to construct a theory of racial superiority, falsely claiming it as the ancestor of Indo-European languages and cultures. Although Swami Dayananda Saraswati, the founder of Arya Samaj, used "Arya" in its original meaning, the movement's emergence coincided with the circulation of European racial theories in India. Some scholars suggest that the Arya Samaj might have inadvertently contributed to these ideas by adopting a term co-opted by

with a stronger emphasis on India's cultural and social greatness. He envisioned a glorious Vedic era where a perfect Aryan society thrived, characterised by egalitarianism and a scientific Sanskrit language. Unlike Roy, Saraswati viewed British colonialism as a direct threat to be countered. He advocated for selective emulation of the West, believing that showcasing the superiority of India's ancient past would diminish British influence and discourage conversions to Christianity (Jaffrelot, 2007, p. 8). As a region with a majority of Muslim and a significant Sikh population, the demographic context in Punjab where Arya Samaj emerged likely influenced the movement's emphasis on Hindu revivalism and cultural assertion. After Dayananda's death, Arya Samaj continued to grow in Punjab and eventually took on a more political character (Jaffrelot, 2007, p. 8), shaping the course of Hindu identity and contributing to the evolving landscape of Indian nationalism. With its emphasis on Hindu distinctiveness and a revivalist spirit, Arya Samaj laid the groundwork for future nationalist movements that would centre on Hindu identity (Shani, 2021, p. 268). As seen in Figure 4, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the year-long celebrations of the Arya Samaj's founder on February 12, 2023, delivering a keynote address on the occasion where he referred to him as "not just a Vedic sage but also a national sage" and highlighted the significance of Saraswati's work and its enduring impact on Indian society (PMO India, 2023).



Figure 4. PM Modi during 200th birth anniversary of Saraswati²⁸

European racial discourse. However, the Arya Samaj's core principles focused on Hindu reform and social upliftment, not racial superiority as was the case with the European modernism (Bhatt, 2001, pp. 14-17).

²⁸ From "PM Modi during 200th birth anniversary of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati" by Prokerala (2023).

While pursuing distinct objectives, both movements played central roles in shaping India's social and political landscape. Brahmo Samaj's emphasis on internal reform within Hinduism, coupled with Arya Samaj's focus on a glorious Hindu past, though seemingly divergent, were to ultimately contribute to the rise of an ethnonationalist consciousness based on Hindu identity in India. Paving the way for a more just and equitable society, Brahmo Samaj's social reforms challenged the status quo (Niemeijer, 1972, pp. 23-24) and eventually promoted a vision for civic nationalism, emphasising unity irrespective of religion which deeply contrasted with the Arya Samaj and the subsequent Hindutva ideology (Bhatt, pp. 99, 130, 143; Bhosale, 2009, p. 420).

Arya Samaj's emphasis on Hindu identity, though potentially exclusionary towards other religious groups, promoted a sense of pride in India's heritage that aligned with the rising nationalist sentiment. The 19th century thus witnessed the genesis of ideas that would continue to influence Indian society for generations to come, shaping debates around social reform, religious identity, and ultimately, the path towards an independent India. Leveraging the concept of a unified Hindu identity through religious and social cohesion, the Arya Samaj leadership strategically implemented the formation of *Shuddhi Sabhas* (conversion councils). This initiative culminated in the establishment of the All-India *Shuddhi Sabha* in 1909, a national organisation dedicated to this purpose (Andersen and Damle, 1987, p. 18).

The Arya Samaj movement championed by pioneers of the later Hindutva ideology (Zavos, 2000, p. 144) exerted a substantial influence on the trajectory of India's socio-religious landscape. Arya Samaj's emphasis on a singularistic interpretation of Hinduism significantly disrupted the promising unity amongst Indians of diverse faiths in their resistance against British colonialism. Furthermore, the movement's doctrines have exacerbated inter-communal tensions, ultimately contributing to the tragic partition of the subcontinent and engendering a deep-seated mistrust between the Hindu and Muslim communities of India, the wounds of which continue to fester.

Consequently, Arya Samaj played a dual role in the Indian struggle against British colonial rule. On the one hand, its emphasis on Vedic ideals and cultural revivalism fostered a sense of pride and unity among Hindus, contributing to the broader Indian nationalist movement. On the other hand, along with its politically aligned figures, it

found common cause with the emerging nationalist movement by emphasising Gandhian principles such as *swadeshi*²⁹ (Jaffrelot, 2007, p. 343; Bhatt, 2001, p. 150; Zavos, 2000, p. 103) and *swaraj*³⁰ (Bhatt, 2001, p. 31). Particularly targeting cultural hegemony and economic exploitation, this strategic alignment cultivated the socio-cultural resistance against British colonial rule. However, Arya Samaj's emphasis on Hindu revivalism, particularly through the reconversion (*shuddhi*) of converted Hindus and Muslims back to Hinduism coupled with its critique of non-Hindu religious practices, led to increased communal tensions. This campaign exacerbated divisions between Hindus and Muslims, fostering mistrust and defensive reactions, including violent clashes. The Arya Samaj's activities having seen as a direct challenge to Muslim identity and solidarity, contributed to the growing communal polarisation in early 20th-century India, catalysing the rise of Muslim ethno-religious nationalism. This polarisation, manipulated by political leaders on both sides exploited, undermined efforts to forge a united Indian identity, ultimately contributing to the partition of India. While Arya Samaj promoted cultural resistance against colonialism, its actions also highlighted the challenges of balancing cultural revivalism with communal harmony in the pursuit of national liberation and unity.

2.2. TRANSFORMATION OF HINDU NATIONALISM IN 20TH CENTURY: TILAK VS. GANDHI

The early decades of the 20th century witnessed a significant transformation in the character of Hindutva, the ideology advocating for a robust Hindu identity in India. Initially conceived as a defensive bulwark in the face of escalating communal tensions and political flux within British India, Hindutva gradually morphed into a more assertive and even militaristic force. This metamorphosis can be attributed to a confluence of

²⁹ Swadeshi, originating from Sanskrit, is a term that means "of one's own country" or "self-sufficiency." In the context of the Indian independence movement, it referred to a boycott of foreign goods and the promotion of domestic production as a means of achieving self-reliance and resisting British colonial rule.

³⁰ "Swaraj" is a term derived from Sanskrit. "Swa" means self, and "raj" means rule or governance. Thus, "Swaraj" translates to "self-rule" or "self-governance." In the context of the Indian independence movement, it represented the concept of political independence and self-determination from British colonial rule.

historical events, socio-political anxieties, and the articulation of a new vision by key ideologues.

In the early 20th century, the Indian National Congress experienced a shift in leadership and ideology, leading to the emergence of militant nationalism. Initially dominated by modernists, the Congress began incorporating revivalist elements advocating for a more aggressive stance and mass mobilisation. This shift became pronounced in 1916 when Bal Gangadhar Tilak, a prominent Maharashtrian revivalist leader, assumed significant influence within the party. Tilak, alongside his associates, employed the *Bhagavad Gita*³¹, to legitimise their reformulations, contrasting sharply with the previously dominant modernist perspectives. Tilak's interpretation of the *Gita* emphasised karma-yoga (the yoga of action), advocating for proactive engagement in worldly affairs, and rejecting the renunciatory interpretations by philosophers like Samkara and Ramanuja. This philosophical foundation aimed to inspire a more dynamic and militant form of nationalism, contrasting the passive and contemplative traditions of earlier Hindu thought (Andersen and Damle, 1987, p. 14). As the Hindutva's relationship with the ancient Hindu scripture is characterised by selective interpretation, recontextualisation, and contestation. Hindutva utilises the sacred texts as a source of inspiration and legitimacy for its political ideology, often reinterpreting their philosophical concepts to fit its agenda.

Emerged as prominent figures in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a triumvirate of prominent nationalist leaders advocated for a more assertive and radical

³¹ The Bhagavad Gita, often referred to as the Gita, is a sacred Hindu scripture in ancient Sanskrit, meaning "Song of the Lord", that forms a part of the ancient Indian epic, the Mahabharata. It is a dialogue between Prince Arjuna and Lord Krishna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, where Arjuna faces a moral dilemma about fighting his relatives in war. Krishna's teachings in the Gita encompass various philosophical and spiritual concepts, including duty (i.e. *dharma*), action (i.e. *karma*), devotion (i.e. *bhakti*), and the nature of reality (Doniger, 2024). Hindutva proponents often selectively interpret its verses to justify their vision of a Hindu-centric India, emphasizing themes like *dharma*, unity, and cultural pride (Bhatt, 2001, p. 34). However, this interpretation is often contested, with critics arguing that it distorts the Gita's original message of compassion and spiritual growth. While the Gita remains a symbol of India's rich heritage, its utilisation within Hindutva discourse raises questions about the extent to which its philosophical teachings are being reinterpreted to serve political purposes (Jaffrelot, 2021, pp. 164-5).

approach to achieving independence from British colonial rule, in contrast to the moderate stance of the Indian National Congress at the time. The Lal-Bal-Pal group, consisting of Lala Lajpat Rai (Lal), Bal Gangadhar Tilak (Bal), and Bipin Chandra Pal (Pal) left an enduring impact on the Indian nationalist movement. This trio, each with their distinct perspectives and approaches, actively shaped the discourse on nationalist movement in India, often with Hinduism as a central theme. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, an ardent revivalist, advocated for a Hindu nation rooted in the Vedic age and countered reformist ideologies. He saw revivalism as an internal affair of each religion and did not believe it hindered nationalism. Tilak's definition of Indian identity transcended religious boundaries, emphasising shared aspirations and contributions to the nation. Lajpat Rai, initially influenced by the Arya Samaj, emphasised the inherent nationalism within Hinduism's ancient traditions. He believed that studying Vedic literature would reveal the deep-rooted national spirit. Rai's interpretation of history often highlighting Hindu kings as "nationalist" heroes resisting foreign invaders later became a central focus of Hindutva's efforts to 'Indianise' the history (Jaffrelot, 2021, p. 170). Eventually recognising the importance of Hindu-Muslim unity in the anti-colonial struggle and embracing the concept of composite Indian nationalism, Bipin Chandra Pal approached nationalism and culture from a philosophical standpoint. While acknowledging the centrality of Hindu civilisation in his vision of the Indian nation, he emphasised the interconnectedness of Indian culture with universal human culture. Pal's understanding of nationalism transcended religious exclusivity and emphasised the shared cultural heritage of India's diverse communities. He envisioned a nationalism that embraced cultural exchange and dialogue, fostering a sense of unity without sacrificing individual identities (Habib, 2017, pp. 25-28).

The revivalist movement, spearheaded by figures like Lal-Bal-Pal, and later Aurobindo Ghose and Swami Vivekananda, sought to reinvigorate Hindu society by linking spiritual enlightenment with social and national welfare. Tilak's reinterpretation of the Gita, which emphasised action over renunciation, found resonance among revivalists who believed in the potential of *Shakti*, the kinetic power of the divinity, symbolised by the divine feminine energy, as a source of immense power within individuals. This concept, coupled with the nondualist philosophy of *Advaita*, advocated for recognising the divine in every person, thereby fostering a collective national

identity³². Aurobindo and Vivekananda, in particular, articulated a vision where nationalism was seen as a divine mission, a manifestation of the divine in the form of the Hindu nation. They argued that India's rejuvenation required tapping into this divine power, thereby transforming spiritual enlightenment into a force for societal and national upliftment (Andersen and Damle, 1987, p. 15).

The ascension of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi to Congress leadership in 1920 marked a significant ideological divergence from the militant nationalism espoused by Tilak and his followers (Andersen and Damle, 1987, p. 16). Gandhi's emphasis on *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and his strategy of passive resistance were met with considerable opposition from revivalist quarters. Leaders like Tilak had justified the use of violence (*himsa*) in defence of the nation against the British "villain", arguing that the moral imperative of self-protection superseded the principle of nonviolence. This clash of ideologies underscored a fundamental debate within the nationalist movement: the efficacy and morality of violent versus nonviolent resistance. Revivalists criticised Gandhi's approach, viewing it as a departure from traditional Hindu principles and a potential threat to Hindu self-respect and vigour. This ideological rift led to a search for alternative forms of protest and ultimately contributed to the fragmentation of the nationalist movement, particularly in the context of Gandhi's perceived appeasement of Muslims, which revivalists saw as undermining Hindu interests (Andersen and Damle, 1987, p. 20).

The pacifist strategy adopted by the Indian National Congress under President Gopal Krishna Gokhale faced scathing criticism from revolutionaries like Tilak, who

³² "According to Aurobindo, the Indian nation "is a mighty Shakti, composed of Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation. . .The Shakti we call India, Bhawani Bharati is the living unity of the Shaktis of three hundred million people..." (Andersen and Damle, 1987, p.24). The selection of the name "Shakti" for the 1998 nuclear detonations presents a fascinating case study in the intersection of political ideology and national security. Within the Hindutva ideology, the concept of Shakti signifies a revitalized Hindu power and a cultural renaissance. It emphasizes proactive engagement and resistance against threats perceived as detrimental to Hinduism and Indian sovereignty. In this context, Operation Shakti, the codename for the nuclear tests conducted by the BJP government in May 1998, served as a tangible manifestation of India's strategic might, demonstrably aligning with the principles enshrined within the Shakti doctrine.

advocated for armed resistance. Inspired by Tilak's calls for violent agitation, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, dissatisfied with mere oration, sought to translate his philosophy into action. He emphasised the necessity of combining rhetoric with militant tactics, meticulously formulating a plan for such an approach (Tien, 2021, p. 154).

Gandhi's suspension of Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922 proved to be a decisive moment, fostering disillusionment among certain segments of the Hindu nationalists. Incidents like the Mappila Rebellion in Malabar further stoked anxieties about the perceived vulnerability of Hindu communities. Leading figures like Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Lala Lajpat Rai emerged as vocal critics of Gandhi's non-violent approach. Malaviya, in 1923, called for the revitalisation of Hindu society through the emulation of Kshatriya valour, implicitly suggesting the inadequacy of non-violent methods in confronting perceived threats. Similarly, Lajpat Rai critiqued Gandhi's strategy, arguing that it weakened Hindu solidarity and fostered a "slave mentality" (Frykenberg, 2008, p. 189).

In sum, the 20th century witnessed a serious discussion between two approaches to defeating British colonialism and achieving independence: through violent methods and through non-violent methods. Hindutva's transformation in this time period was influenced by a shift towards militant nationalism and revivalist interpretations of Hindu scriptures within certain factions of the Indian National Congress. While representing an extremist minority, leaders like Tilak advocated for active resistance, even violence, contrasting with Gandhi's pacifist approach, criticised him as compromising Hindu interests. Disillusionment with Gandhi's methods and anxieties about Hindu communities, particularly among these extremist groups, led to calls for a more assertive, even militant, Hindutva.

2.3. HINDUTVA AS CONCEPTUALISED BY SAVARKAR

The most influential figure in crystallising Hindutva as a militant ideology was Vinayak Damodar Savarkar. A revolutionary thinker and activist, Savarkar's essential work, "Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?" published in 1923 while he was imprisoned, provided the ideological foundation for this new iteration of Hindutva. Savarkar's concept emphasised a deeply nativist and chauvinistic viewpoint. He argued for a unified Hindu

nationhood based on a shared cultural and ethnic identity that transcended caste, language, or regional differences. This identity, according to Savarkar, was rooted in a common ancestry tied to the Indian soil and a glorious ancient cultural heritage. Central to Savarkar's ideology was the unwavering belief that Hindu unity was an indispensable prerequisite for national strength and resilience against both external and internal threats. His narrative of a sacred geography and cultural unity served as a potent rallying point for a more confrontational Hindu nationalism, advocating for a militant stance against any perceived challenges to Hindu dominance and cultural integrity. Frykenberg (2008, p. 190) categorises Savarkar's Hindutva as an exemplar of a "militantly chauvinistic and nativistic form of genomic and geocentric nationalism," arguing that it embodies the characteristics of a classical "political religion par excellence," a fundamentalism emphasising ethnoreligious identity as the core of nationhood.

The principles of Italian nationalist Giuseppe Mazzini profoundly influenced Hindu nationalist thinkers, particularly Savarkar (Andersen and Damle, 1987; Bhatt, 2001, p. 80; Kinnvall, 2007, p. 93). Mazzini's advocacy for cultural revivalism, national unity, and armed resistance against foreign domination inspired Savarkar, who modelled his Young India Society³³ after Mazzini's Young Italy (Bhatt, 2001, p. 80; Jain, 2012, p. 268). Savarkar's deep admiration for Mazzini led him to translate the latter's biography into Marathi and study his works extensively (Barkey et al., 2021, pp. 119-120; Bhatt, 2001, p. 83), shaping Savarkar's conceptualisation of Hindutva as a unifying cultural and civilisational force (Anderson, 2015, p. 46). This influence extended beyond theory, as Savarkar aimed to mobilise Indians across diverse backgrounds under a common nationalist agenda, mirroring Mazzini's vision of a unified Italian identity (Altinova-Telatar, 2017, p. 28). The legacy of Mazzini's ideas in Indian nationalist discourse highlights the global impact of Italian nationalist thought during the colonial era (Casolari, 2000, p. 219).

³³ The revolutionary nationalist term "Young India" was initially adopted by the Savarkar brothers when they founded the Young India Society (i.e. Abhinav Bharat) in 1904. This predates by over a decade the subsequent use of the same name by Lala Lajpat Rai for his 1916 book and by Mahatma Gandhi for his notable journal (Bajpai et al., 2014, p. 159; Blarel, 2014, pp. 8, 18; Engelmeier, 2009, p. 205; Gould, 2004, pp. 96, 120 etc.) published from 1919 to 1931 (Thussu, 2013, pp. 68-69).

The ideological exchange between European and Indian nationalist movements reveals a shared desire for independence and self-determination. Mazzini's concept of a spiritual and cultural connection between the people and their homeland was reflected in Savarkar's articulation of Hindutva as a spiritual and ancestral connection to India (Bhatt, 2001, p. 80, Barkey et al., 2021, pp. 119-120). This spiritual dimension, rooted in Mazzini's writings, provided Savarkar with a framework to define Hindutva as a comprehensive ideology encompassing historical continuity, cultural pride, and political sovereignty (Anderson, 2015, p. 46).

Additionally, translations of works by European nationalist writers like Mazzini, Fichte, and Cavour into Indian languages significantly shaped the intellectual landscape of the Indian independence movement. These works served as guides for political action, emphasising their crucial role in shaping Hindu nationalist thought (Andersen and Damle, 1987, p. 21).

Intriguingly, Savarkar's ideological route presents a fascinating paradox. Initially a proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity (Jain, 2012, p. 269; Tien, 2021, p. 155), his experiences during incarceration³⁴ appear to have coincided with a significant shift towards a more militant form of Hindu nationalism, culminating in the formulation of his ideology of the Hindutva in 1923. Although avoiding simplistic cause-and-effect explanations, Tien (2021, p. 153) implies that the harsh realities of cellular jail and the repeated rejection of his mercy petitions likely had a profound impact on Savarkar's course of action as well as his psyche. While his petitions themselves suggest a pragmatic willingness to appease the British for better treatment, his eventual release with restrictions³⁵ on movement and political activity in a year following the publication of his

³⁴ In March 1910, London authorities arrested Vinayak Savarkar due to his connection with the assassination of A.M.T. Jackson, a magistrate in Nashik, India. The murder weapon had been traced back to Savarkar, who was accused of supplying the pistol used by Anant Laxman Karkare, a member of the Abhinav Bharat (i.e. Young India) Society, the revolutionary group founded by Savarkar in 1904. This event significantly impacted both Nashik and the broader Indian revolutionary movement in Maharashtra (Tien, 2011, p. 153).

³⁵ These restrictions lasted until 1937 (Casolari, 2000, p. 222).

masterpiece might have fuelled a sense of disillusionment with British rule³⁶. Savarkar disagreed with Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity, arguing that such a policy would only bolster Muslim pride and separatist tendencies, as Jain (2012, p. 270) notes. On the other hand, Jain explicitly states:

In the long term he became the father of Hindu nationalism and Hindu unity. This was a challenge to the mainstream of the Indian nation. Jinnah propagated the idea of 'Two nation theory', after Savarkar had founded the idea of Hindutva. Consequently, Savarkar and Hindu Mahasabha became tools of the British Policy of divide and rule. He could not become a patron of the undivided nationalism (Jain, 2012, p. 269).

Accordingly, the evolution of Hindutva from a so-called "defensive" posture against Muslims and British colonialism to a more assertive and even militaristic ideology in the early 20th century was driven by a confluence of historical events, socio-political anxieties, and the articulation of a new vision by key ideologues like Savarkar. This transformation marked a significant shift away from Gandhian ideals of non-violence and ushered in an era of more confrontational approaches to safeguarding Hindu identity in British India. It was not only the British colonisers that the Hindutva ideologues targeted, but also the legacy of Muslim rulers in India. Presented as defenders of Hinduism against Muslim dominance, the veneration of historical heroes such as Shivaji, a Maratha ruler who revolted against Mughal rule in 1659, played a crucial role in the nation-building agenda of Hindu nationalist leaders like Tilak and Savarkar and became a potent symbol for future generations of Hindu nationalists. For these leaders, the glorification of figures like Shivaji was not merely an act of historical remembrance but a strategic tool to foster a unified Hindu identity. Tilak, for instance, utilised the legacy of Shivaji to cultivate a sense of Hindu pride and resistance against foreign domination, particularly Muslim domination as well as British colonial rule. By organising public celebrations and promoting the memory of Shivaji, Tilak aimed to mobilise the masses, unite them across

³⁶ It is also possible that the limitations placed upon him prior to his release forced a more introspective focus, leading him to dive deeper into the concept of Hindu identity, potentially culminating in a more exclusive and assertive interpretation. The true reasons behind Savarkar's ideological transformation remain open to further exploration, likely requiring a nuanced examination of his writings and activities during both his imprisonment and the years following his release.

regional and caste lines, and instil a sense of historical continuity and purpose. This approach helped create a collective memory centred around the valour and success of Hindu warriors, which was crucial for building a cohesive nationalist movement (Andersen and Damle, 1987, p. 17; Jaffrelot, 2007, p. 6; Tien, 2021, p. 152; Zavos, 2000, p. 71-73; Bhatt, 2001, p. 32; Bhosale, 2009, p. 420).

Savarkar, a prolific thinker and writer, articulated Hindutva as not just a religious identity but a comprehensive cultural and national identity for Hindus. In his seminal work “Essentials of Hindutva,” penned while he was incarcerated in London, Savarkar outlined his vision of Hindutva as encompassing a common Hindu culture, history, and geographical homeland stretching from the Indus to the seas (Savarkar, 1923, p.12). He argued that Hindus, as the indigenous inhabitants of this land, had a legitimate claim to India as their fatherland and holy land, rooted deeply in Vedic traditions and mythology (Savarkar, 1923, p. 99). This formulation positioned Hindutva as a unifying force, excluding those who did not subscribe to this cultural and historical narrative, particularly Muslims and Christians whom Savarkar viewed as culturally and ideologically alien (Savarkar, 1923, p. 80).

The ideological framework of Hindutva propagated by Savarkar and the Hindu Mahasabha set the stage for a redefinition of Indian nationalism, advocating for a *Hindu Rashtra* (i.e. Hindu Nation and/or State) where Hindus and those assimilated into Hindu culture would thrive. This vision contrasted sharply with the inclusive secular nationalism promoted by the Indian National Congress, which sought to accommodate India’s diverse religious and cultural identities under a unified, secular framework. Savarkar’s articulation of Hindutva profoundly influenced subsequent Hindu nationalist movements, including the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its political wing, the BJP, shaping the political landscape of independent India and contributing to ongoing debates over the nature of Indian identity and secularism.

Savarkar expanded on this strategy by embedding the veneration of historical heroes within the broader ideology of Hindutva. In his seminal work, *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?*, he also emphasised the importance of heroes such as Shivaji and Rana Pratap as paragons of bravery and sacrifice. Savarkar argued that celebrating these historical figures would instil a sense of pride and identity among Hindus, encouraging them to see

themselves as part of a resilient tradition that had successfully resisted foreign subjugation. This glorification aimed to foster a militant Hindu identity capable of reclaiming past glory and asserting dominance in the present and future (Savarkar, 1923, p. 56; Frykenberg, 2008, p. 191).

The veneration of historical heroes by Hindu nationalist leaders, such as Tilak and Savarkar, was not merely symbolic but a strategic tool for nation-building, aiming to unify Hindus across regional, caste, and linguistic divides (Sharma, 2002, p. 27). By celebrating figures like Shivaji, these leaders crafted a narrative of Hindu resistance against Muslim rulers, framing Muslims and the Turkish/Mughal legacy as foreign invaders and enemies of the Hindu nation (Savarkar, 1923, p. 58-59; Sharma, 2002, p. 15). This narrative marginalised Muslim contributions to Indian history (Gould, 2004, p. 138), reinforcing communal divisions and legitimising contemporary communal politics (Bhatt, 2001, p. 35) by portraying Indian history as a continuous struggle between Hindus and Muslims. As is central to Hindutva ideology, this selective hero worship played a crucial role in shaping the nation-building agenda of the Hindu nationalist movement, fostering a militant Hindu identity aimed at asserting dominance in both the present and future (Bhatt, 2001, p. 34; Frykenberg, 2008, p. 192).

2.4. IMPACT OF BRITISH DIVIDE-AND-RULE POLICIES IN FORMING HINDUTVA

The Partition of Bengal in 1905, implemented by British colonial rule, significantly intensified Hindu-Muslim tensions, marking a critical moment in the history of Indian communal politics. The partition aimed to divide the large province of Bengal into two separate entities: a Muslim-majority East Bengal and a Hindu-majority West Bengal. This administrative decision by the British was perceived by many Hindus as a deliberate attempt to weaken their political influence and to “divide and rule” by fostering communal divisions. This perception led to a surge in revolutionary activities, particularly by groups like the Abhinava Bharat Society and the Anushilan Samiti who sought mass support to foment a national uprising against the colonial government (Andersen and Damle, 1987, p. 17). The partition also played a crucial role in the ideological development of Hindutva, or Hindu nationalism. As Salam (2018) highlights, the concept of *Bharat Mata*, or Mother India, emerged prominently during this period, symbolising

the nation as a Hindu goddess. This imagery deeply rooted in Hindu mythology as depicted in Figure 5, was used by Hindutva ideologues to promote a vision of India that was intrinsically tied to Hindu identity. The invocation of Bharat Mata served to rally Hindus around a common cultural and religious heritage, but it also alienated non-Hindu communities, particularly Muslims, who were excluded from this nationalist narrative. The conflation of religious symbolism with national identity thus laid the groundwork for a “majority communalism masquerading as nationalism” that marginalised Muslims and other minorities (Salam, 2018, p. 83).



Figure 5. One of the Earliest Depictions of Bharat Mata³⁷

³⁷ This portrayal of Bharat Mata as a divine figure adorned with Hindu symbolism – saffron robes, lotus flowers, and multiple arms holding objects of sustenance and faith- was created by a Bengali painter Abanindranath Tagore in 1905. This image implicitly identifies the nation with Hindu traditions and it is one of the earliest depictions of the “Mother India” as a political icon (Kumar, 2024).

Although Bengal was to be reunited by the British in 1911, the creation of the *All India Muslim League (AIML)* in 1906, a year after the partition attempt, further galvanised Hindu assertiveness and deepened communal divisions. The establishment of the All-India Muslim League (AIML) in 1906 marked a significant turning point in Indian nationalism. While initially advocating for Muslim rights within a unified India, the AIML increasingly adopted a divisive role in the Indian nationalist struggle against British rule. This became evident in its conflicts with the Muslim *ulama* (religious scholars) who, under the leadership of figures like Maulana Azad's vision of composite nationalism aligned with Mahatma Gandhi emphasising Hindu-Muslim unity. The AIML's divisive role further manifested in its refusal to participate in the Quit India Movement of 1942, a major nationalist campaign against British rule. Instead, the League focused on consolidating its power base and pursuing a separate Muslim state. This divisive approach culminated in the *Lahore Resolution of 1940*, which formally demanded the creation of Pakistan. While the AIML played a crucial role in securing a separate homeland for Muslims, its divisive tactics and conflicts with other nationalist groups ultimately contributed to the partition of India and the tragic violence that accompanied it.

Parallel to the rise of Hindu ethno-religious nationalism, the AIML's contribution in fragmenting the consolidated Indian nationalist front against British colonial rule by promoting a distinct ethnoreligious nationalism focused on Muslim identity, whether intentionally or not, aligned with the British strategy of divide and rule. This coincidence of the instant emergence of ethnoreligious nationalism for both components of the Indian society in a turning point of history, prompts further inquiry into their potential role in unwittingly contributing to the perpetuation of colonial dominance and the colonialist projections for the subcontinent in the post-colonial era. While the League initially aimed to safeguard Muslim interests within a unified India, the AIML's demand for separate electorates for Muslims, which was later to be granted by the British in *Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909*, heightened anxieties among Hindus about their future in a politically divided India. This led to the emergence of Hindu nationalist organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha, which sought to protect Hindu interests and counter Muslim political mobilisation (Sharma, 2002, p. 21). In other words, Hindu nationalism and Muslim

nationalism, mutually excluding each other, continuously reproduced each other at the same time and intriguingly served the British colonial agenda.

The Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909, which introduced separate electorates for Muslims, were particularly contentious, reflecting the British policy of “divide and rule”. Through these reforms, the British institutionalised communal representation whereby Muslims were seen by many Hindus as a threat to their political power. As Tien (2021) explains, the creation of separate Muslim electorates under the Morley-Minto Reforms prompted the formation of the Hindu Mahasabha, which aimed to safeguard Hindu rights and interests. The reforms reinforced the perception of Muslims as a distinct political community with separate interests, thereby exacerbating communal tensions and fuelling Hindu fears of political marginalisation in a pluralistic India (Tien, 2021, p. 155). The British policy of communal representation also led to the establishment of Hindu Sabhas throughout Punjab and other regions. Jaffrelot (2007) notes that the promise of separate electorates for Muslims in 1906, which materialised with the Morley-Minto Reforms, prompted the Hindu urban elite to organise themselves to protect their interests. Leaders like Lal Chand articulated the anxieties of Hindus regarding British policies, emphasising the need for Hindu unity and political mobilisation in the face of perceived Muslim dominance. This period saw the consolidation of Hindu identity as a political force, laying the foundation for future Hindutva movements (Jaffrelot, 2007, p. 11).

Zavos (2000) further explores the dilemmas faced by elite Hindus in the context of the Morley-Minto Reforms. The reforms, which quantified caste and religious communities, placed emphasis on numerical strength as a basis for political representation. This demographic competition between Hindus and Muslims reinforced communal identities and contributed to the polarisation of Indian society. The reforms not only recognised a separate Muslim constituency but also implicitly affirmed a Hindu constituency, thereby entrenching communal divisions and shaping the trajectory of Indian politics (Zavos, 2000, p. 76). Communalism, which prioritises religious or ethnic identity over national unity in spite of causing social and political division, intensified significantly after the Morley-Minto Reforms, though its roots can be traced to pre-colonial times.

The politicisation of Hindu and Muslim identities, transforming them into ethnic rather than purely religious markers, is a consequence of the historical events described. This shift, as analysed by Bhatt (2001), has had lasting implications due to the division of political administration along religious lines, contributing to the ongoing communal tensions and complexities in the region. The introduction of separate electorates and the increasing political representation of Muslims led to widespread resentment among Hindus, particularly in Bengal. The violent reactions and subsequent reunification of Bengal in 1911 did little to ease communal tensions. Instead, the period following the partition saw the rise of Hindu nationalist rhetoric emphasising Hindu self-pride and opposition to Muslim political ambitions. These themes echoed strongly in contemporary Hindutva ideology, highlighting the enduring impact of the 1905 partition on Hindu-Muslim relations in India (Bhatt, 2001, pp. 45-46). The Partition of Bengal in 1905 and the subsequent political developments, including the creation of the AIML and the Morley-Minto Reforms, significantly heightened Hindu-Muslim tensions and contributed to the rise of Hindu nationalism as well as Muslim nationalism. These events that took place during the British colonial rule set the stage for the enduring conflict between Hindu and Muslim identities in the subcontinent.

In the early 20th century, amidst the backdrop of British colonial rule in India, the formation of the *All India Hindu Mahasabha*, shortly the Hindu *Mahasabha* (i.e. Great Assembly), in 1915 marked a significant milestone in the articulation of Hindu political identity. This organisation, born out of earlier efforts by Hindu Sabhas to unite Hindus across the subcontinent, aimed to consolidate Hindu interests and foster solidarity among various Hindu communities. At its core was the aspiration to unify Hindus as an organic whole, emphasising a shared cultural and historical heritage that transcended regional and linguistic differences. This vision found ideological grounding in the concept of Hindutva, championed by Savarkar, who served as the president of the Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1944 (Shani, 2021, p. 268).

The Khilafat Movement, a defining moment in early 20th-century Indian history, emerged as a pan-Islamic movement aimed at protecting the Ottoman Caliphate following its dissolution after World War I. Rooted in the religious sentiments of Indian Muslims, it resonated deeply with their global identity and aspirations. However, the movement's impact extended far beyond its religious origins, profoundly influencing the complex

relationship between Hindus and Muslims in India. At its core, the Khilafat Movement exemplified the potential for Hindu-Muslim unity (Bulut and Aras, 2023). Mahatma Gandhi, who became “the supreme leader of Indian National Congress after Champaran movement” in 1916 (Mishra, 2023), recognised the movement’s potential to galvanise a united front against British colonialism. He embraced the Khilafat cause, advocating for Hindu-Muslim cooperation under the banner of composite nationalism, an ideology emphasising shared identity and common goals among Indians, regardless of their religious affiliation.

This spirit of unity was echoed by prominent Muslim leaders like Hussain Ahmed Madani, the Dean of *Darul Uloom Deoband*, the epicentre of the Islamic revivalist Deobandi Madrassas (Jaffrelot, 2002, p. 136), and Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, hailing from the Pashtun tribal areas bordering Afghanistan, who championed interfaith harmony and opposed the partition of India. Their advocacy for a united India, where Hindus and Muslims could coexist peacefully, underscored the movement’s potential to bridge the communal divide. However, deep-seated anxieties and suspicions laid beneath this layer of unity. Hindu nationalists, represented by organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha, viewed the movement with apprehension. Despite the Khilafat Movement’s clear anti-imperialist and anti-colonial stance, especially against the global dominance of the British Empire, Hindutva proponents argued, under the guise of protecting Hindu interests, that the movement’s focus on the Ottoman Caliphate could undermine Indian nationalism. They expressed concerns that Indian Muslims’ allegiance to the Caliphate might overshadow their loyalty to the flourishing Indian nation.

The *Malabar rebellion of 1921*, where Muslim cultivators and tenants (i.e. the Moplahs³⁸) in Kerala rose against local Hindu landlords and the colonial administration is considered a key milestone in the development of Hindu nationalism. Ignited by a police raid on a mosque, this rebellion coincided with the Khilafat Movement’s efforts to

³⁸ The term “Moplah” (also spelled Mappila) refers to a Muslim community primarily located in the Malabar region of Kerala, in south India. Historically, it denoted the descendants of Arab traders who married local women, but it gradually encompassed the broader Muslim population in the region. However, the term’s usage has evolved, as it is now considered archaic and potentially offensive. The preferred terminology to address this community is “Mappila Muslim” or simply “Muslim,” reflecting a more inclusive and culturally sensitive approach.

mobilise the Hindu-Muslim united front against British imperialism, a period seen as critical for the Hindu nationalist movement (Sikand, 1997, p. 69; Zavos, 2000, p. 144). Jaffrelot (2007) contends³⁹ that the international reach of the Khilafat Movement, along with the violence of the Moplah Rebellion, served as a key catalyst for the consolidation of Hindu nationalism (Jaffrelot, 2007, p. 13). However, Zavos (2000) challenges Jaffrelot's model, arguing that it overemphasises the role of Muslim mobilisation in the rise of Hindu nationalism. Zavos highlights the collaborative efforts between the Khilafat Committee and the Congress party as evidence of a broader nationalist spirit, and he stresses that the Moplah Rebellion's anti-Hindu aspects were more a response to oppressive colonial rule than religious animosity. Zavos also critiques Jaffrelot's portrayal of a monolithic Muslim community, suggesting it may have contributed to stereotypes that fuelled Hindu nationalism, and he emphasises the British colonial administration as another target of Hindu nationalist ideology (Zavos, 2000, pp. 145-146). The Moplah Rebellion, characterised by intense communal tensions and forceful British suppression, was extensively exploited in the British Indian government press, with particular focus on allegations of forced conversions of Hindus to Islam. While initially framed by the British administration as the actions of Muslim extremists influenced by the Khilafat movement, contemporary historical scholarship emphasises the rebellion's roots in longstanding agrarian grievances and resistance against oppressive colonial and landlord rule (Zavos, 2000, p. 146). Nonetheless, despite its communal dimensions, this event should be understood within the broader context of socio-economic and political struggles during colonial India.

In the aftermath of the Moplah Rebellion's heightened communal tensions, Arya Samaj missionaries capitalised on the opportunity by reviving *shuddhi* activities in Malabar to reintegrate allegedly coerced Hindu converts back into the Hindu fold, even gaining the cooperation of traditionally opposed *Sanatani Hindus*⁴⁰, thus reigniting

³⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot proposes that Hindu nationalism develops through a process of "stigmatisation and emulation," simultaneously demonizing and selectively adopting aspects of cultures perceived as threats (Jaffrelot, 2007, p. 30).

⁴⁰ The term "Sanatani Hindu" refers to a traditionalist or orthodox Hindu (Sikand, 1997, p. 70) who adheres to the Sanatana Dharma, the eternal and universal moral order underlying Hinduism. It emphasizes a strict

shuddhi as a central rallying point for Hindu public opinion and mobilisation (Sikand, 1997, p. 70). Furthermore, Sikand (1997) maintains some allegations suggesting that British authorities strategically distorted history textbooks to foster animosity between Hindus and Muslims in India. By highlighting purported atrocities committed by Muslim rulers against Hindus, they aimed to sow discord and division within Indian society. Additionally, there was apprehension among high-caste Hindus about the increasing conversion of low-caste Hindus to Islam, which threatened their social dominance. Concurrently, some Muslim leaders suspected that certain British or pro-British factions, such as the Hindu Mahasabha, played a role in exacerbating Hindu-Muslim tensions to undermine the anti-colonial nationalist movements. This environment highlighted colonial strategies of manipulation and communal polarisation intersected with indigenous fears and suspicions, shaping the socio-political landscape of colonial India (Sikand, 1997, p. 72).

Despite strongly advocating a Hindu-Muslim unity, the Khilafat Movement failed to address the communal tensions that ultimately led to the Partition. Although, the movement's transnational focus on the Ottoman Caliphate and the fate of Türkiye highlighted a global resistance against British imperialism and colonialism, the rise of separatist ideologies and underlying tension within Indian society resulted in tragic consequences.

The Mahasabha's pragmatic approach was further evident in its willingness to form coalition governments with the Muslim League in some provinces during the 1930s. This seemingly paradoxical alliance between two organisations with divergent ideological goals was driven by a shared desire for political power and influence. Both parties sought to maximise their representation in provincial governments and use it to advance their respective agendas. However, this temporary alliance did not resolve the underlying ideological differences between Hindutva and Muslim nationalism. The Mahasabha's vision of a Hindu Rashtra clashed with the Muslim League's demand for a separate Muslim homeland, that was to become the *Pakistan Movement*. This fundamental conflict of interests ultimately led to the breakdown of the coalition and the

adherence to the ancient scriptures and traditions, often interpreted in a conservative manner (Britannica, 2023).

subsequent partition of India and the establishment of Pakistan in 1947. The Mahasabha's pragmatic approach, while seemingly contradictory to its core ideology, allowed it to broaden its political base and gain greater influence. However, this tactical shift did not resolve the fundamental ideological differences that would ultimately shape the course of Indian history.

The Quit India Movement of 1942, launched by the Indian National Congress (INC) under Mahatma Gandhi's leadership, ignited a passionate commitment among Indian nationalists. It called for the immediate end to the British rule and the establishment of a sovereign Indian nation. However, this call for unity was met with opposition from two significant forces: the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha. Their divergent responses to this unified call for freedom, the Quit India Movement, and their subsequent alignment with the British colonial administration, raise pertinent questions about their origins and motivations, particularly in light of their earlier stances during the Khilafat Movement.

The INC, guided by Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolent resistance and composite nationalism, sought to unite all Indians, regardless of their religious affiliation, in the fight for freedom. The Quit India Movement was envisioned as a mass uprising that would demonstrate the unwavering resolve of the Indian people to break free from colonial shackles. However, the Muslim League, under Muhammad Ali Jinnah's leadership, opposed the movement, arguing that it would jeopardise the interests of Muslims and undermine their demand for a separate Muslim homeland. The Hindu Mahasabha, led by Savarkar, also opposed the Quit India Movement. This was the point which clearly showed that the two forms of ethnoreligious nationalism undermined the anti-colonial Indian nationalism. The two movements argued that India's participation in World War II alongside the British was crucial for the country's security and stability. Savarkar urged Hindus to support the British war effort and even encouraged them to join the British Indian Army. This stance, seen as prioritising Hindu interests over the broader national cause, further alienated the Mahasabha from the mainstream nationalist movement.

The Muslim League's opposition to the Quit India Movement has been interpreted by some historians as a calculated move to consolidate its position as the sole representative of Muslim interests. By distancing itself from the Congress-led movement,

the League could portray itself as the only party capable of safeguarding Muslim rights and aspirations. This strategy ultimately paved the way for the partition of India in 1947, as the League successfully exploited communal divisions to achieve its goal of a separate Muslim state. Similarly, the Hindu Mahasabha's opposition to the Quit India Movement can be seen as a reflection of its deep-seated suspicion of Muslims and its desire for a Hindu-dominated India. The Mahasabha's emphasis on Hindu unity and its support for the British war effort, while ostensibly driven by nationalistic concerns, also served to strengthen its own political base and marginalise Muslim voices within the nationalist movement.

The divergent responses of the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha to both the Khilafat Movement and the Quit India Movement raise questions about the extent to which their actions were influenced by British divide-and-rule tactics. Their actions, whether driven by genuine concerns or political opportunism, ultimately played into the hands of the British and undermined the prospects of a united India. The British, eager to maintain their control over India, actively sought to exploit communal divisions and foster mistrust between Hindus and Muslims. By encouraging separatist tendencies and pitting different communities against each other, they effectively weakened the nationalist movement and prolonged their own rule.

India's path to independence was marred by escalating internal divisions, despite the tireless efforts of the Indian National Congress (INC) leadership and prominent Muslim scholars to advocate for unity. Their vision of a united India was overshadowed by rising communal tensions, fuelled by the competing visions of the Hindu Mahasabha and the Muslim League, and amplified by British colonial machinations. The voices of unity were increasingly drowned out by the uproar for partition, while outbreaks of communal violence, such as the Direct-Action Day riots of 1946, further polarised the political landscape. Ultimately, *the Partition of India in 1947* marked a tragic end to the dream of a united nation, leaving behind a legacy of trauma, displacement, and communal strife that continues to haunt the subcontinent.

CHAPTER 3: EVOLUTION OF HINDUTVA IN INDIAN POLITICS: FROM FRINGE TO POWERHOUSE

To analyse the potential implications of Hindutva on India's foreign policy and its potential impact on relations with other countries, including Türkiye, it is crucial to explore its evolution from a marginal movement to a dominant political force in India. This chapter will provide an overview of Hindutva's rise to prominence in Indian politics, exploring key milestones, significant figures, and the factors that contributed to its growing influence. Focusing on the establishment and rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as a major political force and discussing the BJP's "nuclear nationalism" and its approach to nation-building, the chapter also examines the role of Hindutva under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and its enduring influence on Indian politics.

3.1. ESTABLISHMENT OF BJP

The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, a staunch advocate of religious pluralism, and the communal violence surrounding India's partition in 1947 led to a decline in the influence of Hindu nationalist organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha. However, new political parties and organisations with Hindu nationalist leanings gradually emerged in post-independence India, culminating in today's BJP. Factors such as the legacy of composite nationalism, Gandhi's assassination, Nehru's secular leadership, and the presence of influential Muslim members in the Congress party effectively held Hindutva in check for several decades (Ayoob, 2020, p. 423).

The Hindutva ideology led to the formation of the political party Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), or "Indian People's Association," in 1951 shortly after independence, marking an attempt to revive Hindu nationalism on a political platform. Syama Prasad Mukherjee, a prominent figure in the Hindu Mahasabha, envisioned the BJS as a "nationalistic alternative" to the Indian National Congress (INC) (Ahmed, 2021, p. 12) which had led the independence movement. However, the BJS initially struggled to gain traction, competing with the Hindu Mahasabha for a similar support base and facing the challenge of establishing its distinct identity in the political landscape.

The BJS gradually gained ground in the 1960s, particularly in North and Central India. The party's ideology, rooted in Hindutva, resonated with a section of the Hindu population who felt marginalised or underrepresented in the post-independence era. The BJS capitalised on issues such as cow protection, the perceived appeasement of minorities, and the demand for a uniform civil code, which resonated with a section of the Hindu electorate.

The 1970s witnessed the rise of regional forces like Shiv Sena, a Marathi nationalist party led by Bal Thackeray. Shiv Sena's focus on Marathi identity and its aggressive Hindu nationalist stance further broadened the spectrum of Hindutva politics. This period also saw growing disillusionment with the INC, leading to the formation of the Janata Party, a coalition of diverse political forces united by their opposition to the INC. The BJS joined this coalition, but its Hindutva ideology often clashed with the secular and socialist leanings of other coalition partners, ultimately leading to its withdrawal and the dissolution of the Janata government.

In 1980, the BJS transformed into the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), or "Indian People's Party," marking a significant turning point in the trajectory of Hindu nationalism. The BJP, under the leadership of charismatic figures like Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, sought to broaden its appeal beyond the core Hindutva base. While maintaining its emphasis on Hindu identity and ethno-religious or ethnic/cultural nationalism⁴¹, the party also focused on issues of national security, economic development, and good governance (Bannerji, 2006).

The Ram Janmabhoomi movement, centred around the demand for the construction of a Ram temple at the disputed site in Ayodhya, became a defining issue

⁴¹ "The notions of cultural and political nationalism were already in use by the end of the 19th-century in Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore used them in his novels and connected cultural nationalism to what he called 'constructive swadeshi' (nationalism) intended for cultural and social reform. But his usage was secular and had no anti-Muslim connotations. In the RSS context in Maharashtra, U.R (Uttar Pradesh) and M.P. (Madhya Pradesh), the notion of cultural nationalism took on a virulent anti-Muslim and communal character and 'political' nationalism was degraded to mere 'territorial' nationalism, thus showing a distance from the Indian National Congress and Gandhi - both in terms of desire for forming a national state and having an all-India and inclusive view of the nation" (Bannerji, 2006, p. 387).

for the BJP in the late 1980s. This movement, fuelled by religious fervour and a narrative of historical grievances, galvanised large sections of the Hindu population and propelled the BJP to national prominence (Ahmed, 2021, p. 14; Chiriyankandath, 2007, p. 12). By framing the construction of the Ram temple as a redressal of past wrongs and a reassertion of Hindu identity, the movement resonated with a broad base of supporters, solidifying the BJP's political clout.

However, the movement took a violent turn in 1992 when Hindu mobs demolished the Babri Masjid (i.e. the Baburian Mosque), a mosque believed to have been constructed in 1528-29 by a commander of Babur Shah (Britannica, 2024). This event led to widespread communal riots and exacerbated religious tensions across the country. This tragic event not only tarnished the BJP's image but also intensified communal polarisation, marking a watershed moment in Indian politics. The destruction of the mosque and the BJP's association with the Ram Janmabhoomi movement accentuated the party's role in amplifying Hindu nationalist sentiment, a trend that continues to shape its policies and electoral strategies to this day.

The Ram Janmabhoomi movement, culminating in the demolition of the Babri Masjid, represents a crucial moment in the ascendancy of Hindutva ideology in India. Rooted in the claim that the Babri Masjid was constructed on the birthplace of the Hindu deity Ram, the movement mobilised substantial public support by tapping into cultural and religious sentiments. The Hindu nationalist activists' destruction of the mosque, commissioned centuries earlier by a Turkic Muslim ruler, was not merely a symbolic act but a manifestation of the broader Hindutva agenda, which aims to reshape Indian national identity based on Hindu majoritarianism. This event served as a catalyst for the popularisation of Hindutva among the Indian populace, dramatically altering the political landscape by reinforcing Hindu communal identity and influencing mainstream political discourse. The subsequent socio-political transformations, including the electoral success of parties espousing Hindutva ideology, highlight the profound impact of the Ayodhya conflict on the mobilisation of Hindu nationalism and its integration into the national consciousness.

The period from 1980 to 1998 witnessed the BJP's gradual ascent in Indian politics. Vajpayee and Advani emerged as prominent leaders, each playing a crucial role

in shaping the party's trajectory. Vajpayee, known for his moderate and inclusive approach, sought to project a more acceptable face of Hindutva, emphasising cultural nationalism and good governance. Advani, on the other hand, adopted a more assertive stance, championing the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and appealing to Hindu nationalist sentiments.

The BJP's electoral fortunes improved significantly during this period, with the party making substantial gains in the 1989 and 1991 general elections. The Ram Janmabhoomi movement played an important role in mobilising support, as it resonated with a large section of the Hindu electorate who felt their religious and cultural identity was under threat. The BJP's success in these elections laid the groundwork for its eventual rise to power (Çınar et al., 2012, pp. 72-80).

3.2. BJP'S "NUCLEAR NATIONALISM"

In 1998, the BJP formed a national coalition government under the leadership of Vajpayee, marking a watershed moment in Indian politics. The Vajpayee government's tenure was marked by a complex interplay of coalition politics and the assertion of Hindu nationalist ideals. The government's decision to conduct nuclear tests (Pokhran-II) in 1998, while controversial, was met with widespread approval among Hindu nationalists, who saw it as a symbol of India's growing power and assertiveness on the global stage. However, the Vajpayee government also faced criticism for its handling of the Gujarat riots in 2002, which witnessed widespread violence against Muslims. This incident raised concerns about the BJP's commitment to secularism and tarnished its image in the eyes of many. Despite these challenges, the Vajpayee government completed its full term, marking a significant milestone for the BJP. The party's success in navigating the complexities of coalition politics and its ability to implement a range of policy initiatives, including infrastructure development and economic reforms, further solidified its position as a mainstream political force.

Unlike previous Congress administrations who maintained ambiguity, India's nuclear policy underwent a dramatic shift after the BJP-led coalition under Vajpayee conducted nuclear tests in Pokhran, in May 1998. This move signalled a clear departure from the established principles of non-alignment and disarmament championed by

Gandhi and Nehru. Driven by a desire to solidify its power and project national strength, the BJP prioritised Hindutva ideology over traditional foreign policy. The tests served multiple purposes: demonstrating decisiveness within the coalition, countering accusations of weakness on national security, and boosting India's global standing. Despite international opposition, particularly from the P-5⁴², India's ambassador, Arundhati Ghose, strategically navigated the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) negotiations, highlighting the hypocrisy of existing nuclear powers. However, critics argue that security concerns were overshadowed by domestic political gain, as the BJP aimed to bolster its position through what is termed by Arundhati Roy in her *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* in 2004 as "nuclear nationalism" (Williams, 2011). This shift marked a turning point in India's foreign policy (Jain, 2010, p. 59).

Following India's nuclear tests in Pokhran⁴³, the then US deputy secretary of state, Strobe Talbott (2004), described the attitude of the BJP officials as defiant and playful. Jaswant Singh, the de-facto foreign minister, sang a revised version of a Bollywood song (Joshi, 1998), underscoring India's determination to build a new future⁴⁴. Singh

⁴² The five Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) nuclear weapon states: China, France, Russia, UK, and USA.

⁴³ India's nuclear program entered a new phase with Pokhran-II (Operation Shakti) in May 1998. This series of five nuclear tests, following the 1974 detonation codenamed Smiling Buddha, marked a significant advancement in the country's atomic capabilities. Notably, the names chosen for these operations carry symbolic weight. "Smiling Buddha" evokes a sense of peaceful achievement, reflecting the initial focus on civilian nuclear applications. In contrast, "Shakti," the Sanskrit word for power or force, underscores India's assertive shift towards a declared nuclear weapons state. This evolution in code names aligns with the broader transformation of India's nuclear policy.

⁴⁴ It was reported in India Today that the song was from a 1960 hit film sung by Mukesh: *Chodo kal ki baatein/kal ke baat purani/naye daur mein likhenge/mil kar nayi kahani/hum Hindustani, hum Hindustani* (Yesterday's events are now a part of the past. In the new era, we Indians will build a new future together). The newspaper also adds that:

The song went on to extol Indo-ASEAN friendship: "We Hindustani with you ASEANI." There was a quick improvisation too. Team leader Singh's sense of humour could not be contained for long. After hearing the US-Russian duet, he added one more line and rendered it in his own deep baritone voice: "Now that the supers are over the top and can't bang any more/ It's the turn of the Hindustanis/ Hum Hindustani, Hum Hindustani." (Joshi, 1998).

humorously⁴⁵ downplayed the global uproar over India's nuclear tests, likening them to "a few crackers in the Thar⁴⁶" and implying that the world should accept an India with nuclear capabilities as a response to international criticism of India's nuclear tests and a demonstration of India's confidence in its decision (Talbot, 2004, pp. 113-114).

During the later years of Vajpayee's government, significant political shifts occurred within the BJP, marked by internal tensions and emerging new leadership. The period was characterised by heightened conflict with Pakistan and increased communal violence within India, most notably the Gujarat riots in 2002. The riots began when a scuffle between Hindu activists and Muslim vendors in Ahmedabad escalated, leading to a Muslim mob setting fire to a train carrying Hindu pilgrims, resulting in fifty-eight deaths. In retaliation, widespread violence against Muslims ensued, with extensive loss of life and property. The BJP-led state government in Gujarat, under Chief Minister Narendra Modi, was accused of inaction and possibly abetting the violence. Despite the criticism and the atrocities, Modi gained political traction, leading the BJP to a decisive victory in the Gujarat state elections later that year. Modi's rise contrasted sharply with Prime Minister Vajpayee's condemnation of the violence which he described as a "blot on the face of the country" and denounced the revenge attacks as "madness" (Talbot, 2004, p. 216).

The political landscape within the BJP saw a shift towards more hardline elements. In a move seen as appeasing these factions, Vajpayee appointed Lal Krishna Advani as deputy prime minister while retaining his position as home minister. Subsequently, Jaswant Singh, a proponent of moderation, was moved from the foreign ministry to the finance ministry, exchanged with Yashwant Sinha. This reshuffle signalled the ascendancy of conservative forces within the party, marking a decline in

⁴⁵ As did Singh in his song, Madeline Albright (Joshi, 1998), the then US secretary of state, was colloquially referred as "Evita" since her previous ASEAN meeting in 1997 where she improvised a musical show inspired from the hit musical. Her later performance in 1998 ASEAN meeting with Russian foreign minister may have triggered the Jaswant's turn.

⁴⁶ The Thar, or the Great Indian Desert, is where Pokhran is located. Lop Nor was the Chinese test site; "Jiang" was Jiang Zemin, then president of China (Talbot, 2004, p. 114).

influence for figures like Jaswant Singh⁴⁷, who had championed a more balanced approach in both domestic and foreign policy matters (Talbot, 2004, p. 216).

This era also witnessed the initiation of nation-building agenda of BJP. Visweswaran et al. (2009) highlight the introduction of India's National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 2000 as a pivotal moment in the BJP's rise to power. The NCF, focused on instilling Hindu pride and nationalist sentiments, was criticised for historical revisionism and promoting a Hindu-centric narrative. This approach extended to the United States, where Hindutva-aligned groups sought to revise textbooks to align with their ideology. Scholars warn that these revisions could promote majoritarianism and marginalise minorities, and express concern over the global propagation of such ideologies.

3.3. BJP UNDER MODI

Shani (2021) asserts that after Narendra Modi's election as prime minister in 2014, the marginalisation of many Muslims turned to fear. Modi, originating from an Other Backward Caste, rose through the ranks of the RSS and promotes an aggressive version of Hindutva, appealing strongly to India's emerging middle class. His electoral successes in 2014 and 2019 have empowered him to advance key RSS goals: building a Hindu temple at Ayodhya, instituting a uniform civil code, and revoking Jammu and Kashmir's special status. Modi has shifted India's national narrative from a secular, multi-ethnic democracy to a Hindu nation. Under his leadership, the BJP's Hindutva agenda is more assertive than ever. The Sangh Parivar envisions India as a Hindu Rashtra, where minorities are expected to assimilate. Modi's populism centralises power by appealing directly to the Hindu 'people' against perceived corrupt elites and minorities. Muslims are framed as both external and internal 'Others,' with Pakistan as the external threat and Indian Muslims disrupting the imagined Hindu homogeneity. Modi's vision of Hinduism

⁴⁷ Jaswant Singh, a founding member of the BJP and a distinguished leader who held key portfolios such as foreign and defence minister in the Vajpayee government, experienced a significant decline in his political career following his expulsion from the party in 2009 due to his controversial book on Jinnah. His relationship with the BJP further deteriorated after he was denied an election ticket in 2014, leading him to unsuccessfully contest the Barmer constituency as an independent before an accident in the same year left him in poor health (Varma, 2020).

binds the Indian people together, fostering nostalgia for a golden past and positioning Islam as an intrinsically foreign culture (Shani 2021, pp. 271-272).

The ascent of the Hindutva movement to political prominence in India represents a complex narrative marked by adaptation, resilience, and strategic mobilisation of cultural and religious sentiments. This section has traced its evolution from the struggles of post-independence organisations like the Hindu Mahasabha and the BJS to the current dominance of the BJP under Narendra Modi. This trajectory underscores the movement's capacity to reinvent itself amidst shifting socio-political landscapes, leveraging Hindu nationalism alongside broader governance and national security concerns.

The movement's success is evident through significant electoral victories and the implementation of key Hindutva agendas. However, these achievements are juxtaposed with enduring controversies. For instance, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, pivotal in mobilising support, also heightened communal tensions with Muslims culminating in the Babri Masjid demolition and subsequent riots. Similarly, the Gujarat riots of 2002 underscored the potential for violence associated with more extreme facets of the movement.

The rise of Narendra Modi epitomises a new phase in Hindutva politics, characterised by a broadened appeal transcending traditional support bases. While his leadership has accelerated economic growth and enhanced India's global stature, it has also raised concerns about the erosion of secularism and marginalisation of minority communities. This polarisation within Indian society has sparked debates about the compatibility of Hindutva ideology with India's pluralistic and democratic values.

Thus, the legacy of the Hindutva movement is intricate. It has significantly influenced India's political landscape, fostering a renewed sense of Hindu identity and national pride. However, its association with communalism and majoritarianism prompts critical questions about its long-term impact on India's social cohesion and democratic institutions.

3.4. HINDUTVA'S ENDURING INFLUENCE ON INDIAN POLITICS

Hindutva has undergone a profound evolution within Indian politics, transforming from a marginalised ideology to a dominant force. The BJP, closely aligned with Hindutva principles, has achieved significant electoral success, highlighted prominently by Narendra Modi's rise to Prime Minister in 2014 and subsequent re-elections. While the BJP has presented a moderated version of Hindutva, emphasising economic development and national security alongside its core ideology, Hindutva continues to exert a substantial influence on policy decisions and public discourse, thereby shaping India's contemporary trajectory.

The origins of Hindu nationalism can be traced back to the Brahmin (i.e. belonging to the highest caste) intellectuals such as Savarkar, Hedgewar, and Golwalkar. Savarkar, the intellectual pioneer, laid the ideological foundation with his concept of Hindutva. Influenced by Savarkar's ideas, Hedgewar established the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in 1925, a paramilitary organisation designed to promote Hindu nationalism and prepare for a future Hindu *Rashtra*. When Moonje, the leader of Hindu Mahasabha between 1927-1937 and the political mentor of Hedgewar, found a chance to visit Italy to meet with Mussolini, he was inspired by the Fascist Balilla⁴⁸ movement and sought to model the RSS on similar principles. This influence was evident in the RSS's focus on militarising the Hindu nation and organising Hindu youth movements based on fascist models (Bhatt, 2001, pp. 123-124). Golwalkar, Hedgewar's successor, further developed the RSS's ideology, emphasising the importance of Hindu culture. While Golwalkar advocated for the RSS to remain apolitical, his prophesy on the need for a Hindu saviour-leader has significantly influenced subsequent Hindu nationalist leaders, including Narendra Modi (Hall, 2019, pp. 49-50).

The political ascent of Hindutva can be attributed to strategic initiatives by the RSS. After a period of decline following Gandhi's assassination, the RSS refocused its efforts on grassroots activism and social mobilisation. Today, the RSS has its roots in youth mobilisation movements like the Young India Society of Savarkar brothers. the

⁴⁸ Literally meaning the "little boy", Balilla refers to the Italian youth organisation established by the Fascist government to indoctrinate young boys with the ideology and prepare them for military service.

RSS has grown to become one of the world's largest "civil society" organisations. Its influence has extended beyond India through its global network, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), founded in 1964. Additionally, the RSS's political wing, the BJP established in 1980, has played a significant role in shaping Indian politics, particularly since its rise to power. This strategic shift of the RSS involved establishing educational institutions and social service networks, effectively expanding its support base and laying the groundwork for the BJP's emergence as a major political entity in the latter half of the 20th century.

Resonating strongly with an emerging Hindu middle class and those disillusioned with the Congress party's governance record, the rise of BJP's Hindutva was a significant departure from earlier movements. The party's electoral victories, culminating in Narendra Modi's elevation as Prime Minister in 2014, marked a transformative phase for Hindutva within Indian politics. This ascent mirrors the movement's transition from marginalisation to its current dominant position, characterised by the movement's skilful manoeuvring through the complex political landscape of India. The future of the BJP depends on its capacity to reconcile its core Hindutva ideology with the aspirations of India's diverse population. Crucially, the movement must address criticisms alleging its promotion of majoritarianism and marginalisation of religious minorities (G. Singh, 2019, p. 321). As the Hindu ethnonationalist ideology traditionally relies on the upper-class support (Karatepe, 2021, p. 171), questions persist about Modi's potential to make Hindutva evolve into a more inclusive ideology that accommodates India's diversity despite its populist efforts (G. Singh, 2019, p. 323) and charismatic leadership. Failure to do so risks severe social consequences (G. Singh, 2019, p. 320). Moreover, concerns remain about Hindutva's association with political polarisation and social conflict (Babar, 2023).

The ideological contrast between Nehruvian secularism and Modi's Hindutva signifies a fundamental shift in India's governance and national vision. Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, championed a secular state that maintained impartiality in religious matters and prioritised inclusivity. Nehru aimed to foster a pluralistic society that respected diverse cultural and religious practices, underpinned by democratic values, industrial progress, scientific advancement, and social justice. His vision sought to forge

a unified national identity transcending religious and cultural divisions, emphasising unity in diversity.

In stark contrast, Narendra Modi's BJP espouses Hindutva which often marginalises Muslims and other minorities, viewing them as peripheral to the national identity and implementing policies that discriminate against them. The BJP has employed divisive rhetoric and policies, such as campaigns like *ghar wapsi*⁴⁹ (i.e. reconversion) and "love jihad," which exacerbate religious tensions and contribute to discrimination and violence against Muslims (Anderson, 2015, p. 58; Teltumbde, 2018, p. 216; Salam, 2018, p. 289; G. Singh, 2019, p. 317; Aiyar, 2020, p. 11; Shani, 2021, p. 272; Werleman, 2021, pp. 46-47; Babur and Akhtar, 2021, p. 10; Palit, 2023, p. 112). Modi's administration has also displayed authoritarian tendencies, concentrating power, suppressing dissent, and leveraging nationalist propaganda to bolster support, sometimes diverting attention from critical economic and social challenges.

The transition from Nehruvian secularism to Modi's Hindutva has significant implications for India's social cohesion, democratic integrity, and global reputation. The erosion of secular values and the rise of majoritarianism have intensified social divisions, fostering a more polarised and fractured society. Democratic governance under Modi's leadership has shown signs of regression, characterised by increased censorship, curtailment of dissent, and weakening institutional checks and balances, raising concerns about the sustainability of India's democratic framework. Moreover, the government's emphasis on an ethnoreligious nationalist agenda has not adequately addressed pressing economic issues, such as employment generation and economic stability, contributing to growing discontent among India's youth. This ideological shift risks tarnishing India's international image as a secular and democratic nation, jeopardising the foundational principles upon which the country was established.

⁴⁹ "Ghar Wapsi" is a Hindi term that translates to "homecoming" or "returning home." In the Indian context, it refers to a program of religious conversion aimed at bringing people back to Hinduism from other religions, primarily Islam and Christianity. This program is often associated with Hindu nationalist organisations like the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), who believe that all Indians were originally Hindus and that converting to Hinduism is a return to their ancestral roots.

The transformation of Hindu nationalism, influenced significantly by Hindutva ideology, represents a profound shift in historical narrative and policy within India. Contrasting with earlier leaders like Nehru and Gandhi, who acknowledged and praised the cultural contributions and policies of tolerance under the Mughal rule, Hindutva proponents adopt a narrative that denigrates Indo-Islamic civilisation, contributing to an anti-Muslim propaganda (Salam, 2018, p. 267). This revisionist narrative portrays Muslim rulers, many of whom had Turkish origins (i.e. Turks), as invaders and foreign colonisers akin to the British, despite historical evidence of their integration into Indian society (Dalmia and Malone, 2012, p. 1030; Dash, 2008, p. 54; Malone, 2011, p. 20).

Historically, India's narrative of a golden age has been shaped by nationalist aspirations, particularly during the independence movement. While early Indian historians often portrayed ancient India as a golden era, emphasising cultural achievements and the perceived superiority of Hindu civilisation, the Mughal Empire, particularly the period of the Great Mughals (1526–1707), represented another recognised golden age due to its significant cultural, economic, and architectural accomplishments. However, Hindutva ideology, due to its anti-Muslim stance, rejects the Mughal era as India's golden age. Instead, it promotes earlier periods like the ancient Vedic age or the reign of Gupta kings, or more recent periods like the Maratha period, as golden ages, despite scholarly challenges regarding historical evidence (Saleem, 2023, p. 5). This selective historical interpretation seeks to establish a continuous and unbroken Hindu golden age narrative, often disregarding or diminishing the contributions of Muslim rulers and Indo-Islamic civilisation.

Prime Minister Modi and other Hindutva leaders frequently evoke the concept of “twelve hundred years of servitude” to underscore Muslim rule as a period of subjugation (Ghose, 2014; Saleem, 2023, p. 6). This revisionist historical perspective serves to justify the erasure of Muslim heritage from Indian history. Measures taken by BJP governments include renaming cities and landmarks with Mughal or Muslim associations and revising educational curricula to downplay or vilify the achievements of Muslim rulers. This strategic historical revisionism aims to reshape Indian identity around a glorified ancient Hindu past while marginalising the rich and complex Indo-Islamic legacy. Thus, the transformation of Hindu nationalism involves a deliberate and systematic effort to

reinterpret history and cultural heritage in a manner that aligns with contemporary political and ideological objectives.

In his analysis, Saleem (2023) explores “Hindu civilisationism,” as a core component of both Hindutva and the BJP’s narrative, underpinning numerous government policies. He highlights its integration of ethnic, political, and cultural elements to promote Hindu identity as central to Indian nationalism. Saleem critiques the romanticisation of a mythologised Hindu golden era, the marginalisation of Muslim historical contributions, and examines how this ideology, bolstered by populist rhetoric, seeks to position India as a global leader based on Hindu cultural norms.

Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism, particularly through the lens of Hindu civilisationism, articulates the vision of “Akhand Bharat,” or Undivided India, encompassing the entire Indian subcontinent and even extending into parts of Southeast Asia. This concept is rooted in the belief that these regions were historically part of a unified Hindu/Vedic civilisation. Prominent Hindutva leaders such as Savarkar and the RSS leadership have actively advocated for this vision, attributing the 1947 Partition to Congress policies and expressing a commitment to reunite what they perceive as fragmented parts of ancient Bharat. In 1937, Savarkar, in his address at the Hindu Mahasabha’s annual session, emphatically underscored the indivisibility of Hindustan. Similarly, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay, a former RSS *pracharak*⁵⁰ and Bharatiya Jan Sangh president, echoed this sentiment, proclaiming the sacred and integral nature of the entire geographical expanse from Attock⁵¹ to Cuttack⁵² and Kashmir to Kanyakumari⁵³ to Indian identity as shown in Figure 6. Just as the BJS (Ahmed, 2021, p. 82), the

⁵⁰ A “Pracharak” or propagandist, derived from the Hindi word “Prachar,” which means “propagation” or “dissemination”, is a full-time worker or volunteer for the RSS. Their primary role is to propagate the ideology of the RSS and recruit new members through personal contact, meetings, and public lectures. Pracharaks are known for their dedication and commitment to the RSS’s cause, often leading an ascetic lifestyle and devoting their lives to the organisation’s goals. They play a crucial role in spreading the RSS’s ideology and expanding its reach across the country (Andersen and Damle, 1987, pp. 87-88).

⁵¹ Attock is a city and district located in the Punjab province of Pakistan.

⁵² Cuttack, officially Kataka, is located at the east of India at the south of Kolkata.

⁵³ Kanyakumari, formerly known as Cape Comorin, is a town in the southernmost tip of the Indian mainland.

contemporary BJP leadership, including figures like General Secretary Ram Madhav, continues to advocate for Akhand Bharat, envisioning neighbouring countries' voluntary accession to India (Hall, 2019, p. 96; Saleem, 2023, p. 7). RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat has reiterated this vision, emphasising the collective aspiration towards a culturally and civilisationally unified Akhand Bharat. Annually, the World Hindu Council (VHP) commemorates *Akhand Bharat Sankalp Diwas* (or Undivided India Pledge Day) on Pakistan's Independence Day, reflecting on the historical and cultural interconnectedness of the Indian subcontinent with regions such as Afghanistan, Tibet, and Thailand. This vision transcends political boundaries, asserting a cultural unity based on ancient Hindu influences that extend into Southeast Asia just as the legendary spartan "Guruji" of Hindutva, Golwalkar, envisioned a "Hindu nation" that extended far beyond the borders of modern-day India, encompassing countries like Pakistan, Kashmir, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka but also Nepal, Tibet, Afghanistan, Burma ('Brahmadesh'), Indonesia and parts of Laos, Thailand and Cambodia. This concept of "Akhand Bharat" is still used by the Hindutva movement today to represent both pre-Partition India and this much larger territory (Bhatt, 2001, p. 128). The push for Akhand Bharat thus marks a transformation in Hindu nationalism, evolving from a territorial focus to a broader civilisational ideology aimed at reclaiming and uniting regions perceived as integral to an ancient Hindu civilisation (Saleem, 2023, p. 7).

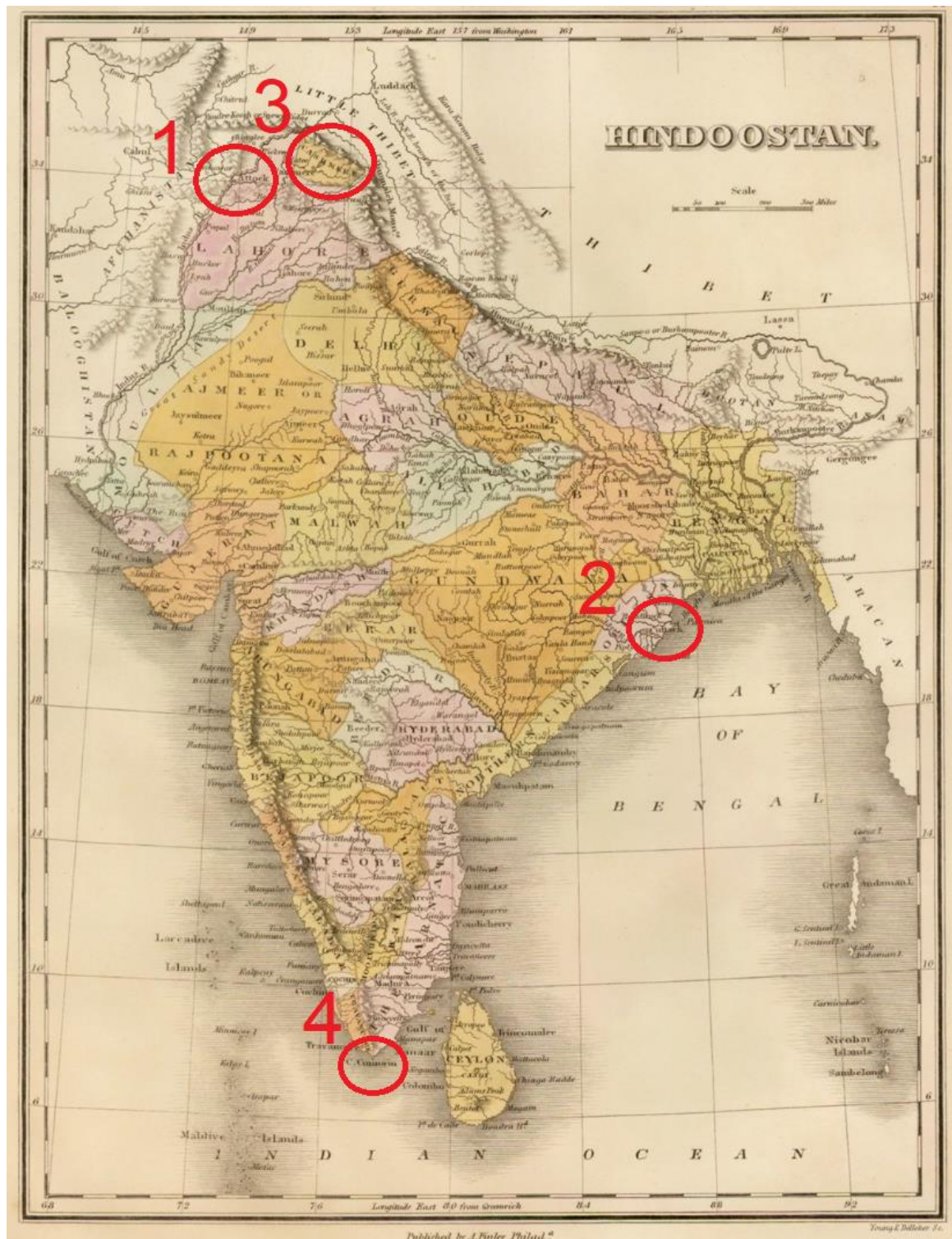


Figure 6. “From Attock to Cuttack” and “Kashmir to Kanyakumari”⁵⁴

⁵⁴ This map of India, “Hindoostan” (Finley, 1824), indicates the origin of the phrase referring the “from Attock⁽¹⁾ to Cuttack⁽²⁾” and “Kashmir⁽³⁾ to Kanyakumari⁽⁴⁾” i.e. from east to west, north to south. Numbers are included by the author of the thesis.

Shani's (2021) analysis employs Anderson's (2015) and his and Longkumer's (2018) typology of "neo-Hindutva" to dissect the Modi administration's approach, highlighting a shift from a "soft" to a more assertive "hard" Hindutva during Modi's second term (2019-2024). This assertiveness is evidenced by increasing incidents of vigilante attacks targeting Muslims under BJP rule, coinciding with the implementation of cow slaughter bans in BJP-governed states. Additionally, the abrogation of Article 370⁵⁵ and its aftermath illustrate the Modi government's pursuit of a Hindu Rashtra. The unilateral dissolution of Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy, accompanied by troop deployments, political detentions, and communication shutdowns, has evoked comparisons to actions typical of an occupying force, undermining India's secular commitments. Furthermore, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)⁵⁶ which explicitly excludes Muslims from eligibility for citizenship based on religion, prioritising non-Muslim refugees from Muslim-majority states, has further eroded India's secular character. Concerns over the National Register of Citizens highlight fears of widespread disenfranchisement among Muslims (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The Supreme Court's decision on the Babri Masjid case, awarding the disputed site to a Hindu temple trust, symbolises the marginalisation of Muslim perspectives, reinforcing a central symbol in the Hindu nationalist narrative.

During the second term of the Modi government, similar to the rest of the world, the COVID-19 lockdowns were exploited to further restrict civil liberties. The strict enforcement of the lockdown measures contributed to the further securitisation of society, particularly targeting minorities. The utilisation of colonial-era laws to suppress dissent blurred the line between democratic governance and authoritarianism. Consequently, many Muslims and minority groups perceive a transition from British colonial rule to a Hindu Rashtra under the current political dispensation (Shani, 2021, p. 274).

⁵⁵ Article 370, previously granting Jammu and Kashmir special status within the Indian constitution, was abrogated by the Indian government in 2019, with the Supreme Court upholding its constitutionality in December 2023.

⁵⁶ The Citizenship Amendment Act of India fast-tracks citizenship for persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, excluding Muslims, and has been criticized for religious discrimination.

The Indian diaspora also plays an important role in shaping the Hindutva ideology. Anderson (2015) observes that the formation of American Hindus Against Defamation (AHAD) in 1997 by VHP America members represented a strategic shift in the Hindutva movement, aimed at safeguarding Hinduism from perceived defamation. Modelled after influential Jewish advocacy groups, these organisations employ similar rhetoric, including references to a supposed Hindu ‘holocaust’⁵⁷ at the hands of Muslim invaders. This strategic shift has fostered significant alliances between Hindu and Jewish groups, exemplified by collaborations between the Hindu American Foundation and the American Jewish Committee, and partnerships between the Hindu Forum of Britain and Jewish organisations like the Board of Deputies and the Community Security Trust. These alliances extend to university campuses, where joint efforts align with narratives of a global ‘clash of civilisations,’ promoting solidarity against perceived threats posed by religious fundamentalism. The strategic partnership between Hindu and Jewish groups is further evidenced by their shared support for far-right, anti-Muslim agendas and frequent high-level meetings between Israeli and Indian leaders, particularly under BJP-led governments. This dynamic reflects Savarkar’s call for the militarisation of Hinduism and the formation of alliances based on common adversaries. The Hindu Forum of Britain’s adoption of strategies modelled on those of Jewish community organisations illustrates the Hindutva movement’s evolution into a more organised and assertive ideological force (Anderson, 2015, pp. 54-55).

In conclusion, the rise of the Hindutva movement from the periphery to a dominant political force exemplifies the intricate dynamics between religious identities, ideology, politics, and society within India’s democratic framework. While critics raise valid concerns about Hindutva’s potential to undermine India’s secular and inclusive

⁵⁷ The highly controversial term “Hindu holocaust” or “Hindu genocide” is used by Hindutva affiliated groups to refer the historical massacres and persecution Hindus have faced notably during Muslim/Turkic conquests and the partition of India, with ongoing violence in Kashmir and contemporary communal incidents. For instance, the second Chief of RSS, Golwalkar used the phrase “holocaust of Hindus” describing the events in East Pakistan in 1963 (Jaffrelot, 2007, p. 123). There is even a particular website dedicated to the propaganda: <https://hindugenocide.com/>. The “Hindu genocide” concept is also mentioned in Roy (2010), Vyas (1994), and Kapoor (2022). Kapoor’s article was published by *Akhil Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana* (i.e. All-India History Reform Project), a subsidiary of RSS.

traditions, particularly regarding the treatment of religious minorities, proponents argue that the movement's focus on Hindu identity fosters national unity and cultural pride aiming to restore Bharat Mata's rightful place on the global stage. The ongoing debate surrounding Hindutva's influence reflects broader questions about the balance between majoritarianism and pluralism in India's democracy. As the movement continues to shape the nation's political landscape, its long-term impact on India's democratic tradition and social cohesion remains a critical area of observation and discourse.



CHAPTER 4: EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND HINDUTVA'S INFLUENCE

4.1. EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Prior to analysing the BJP's foreign policy towards Türkiye and geopolitical fields of convergence and divergence between two countries, this chapter aims to examine the evolution of India's foreign policy starting from the independence in 1947 until the ascendancy of the Hindutva-driven Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in power (1998-2004 and 2014 until today). This period encompasses four significant phases, each contributing uniquely to the shaping of India's international relations: (1) Nehruvian era (1947-1964); (2) Gandhian era (1966-1989); (3) post-Cold War era (1991-2014); and (4) Modian era (2014-present).

By scrutinising these four distinct phases, this chapter aims to elucidate the continuity and changes in India's foreign policy approaches, thereby providing a comprehensive understanding of its evolution. The analysis of these periods will highlight how India's foreign policy has been influenced by changing domestic and international dynamics, leadership styles, and ideological shifts. This foundational understanding is crucial for analysing the subsequent influence of Hindu religious nationalism, or Hindutva, on India's foreign policy under the BJP government. It sets the stage for a nuanced exploration of how historical precedents and evolving geopolitical landscapes have shaped contemporary Indian diplomacy towards Türkiye's geostrategic positions.

4.1.1. Nehruvian Era (1947-1964)

India's long struggle against British colonial rule, culminated with its independence on August 15, 1947. This historic event not only established India as a sovereign nation but also laid the foundation for its foreign policy, which would play a pivotal role in shaping its identity on the global stage. The tragic legacy of the Partition has had a profound impact on the bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan. The ongoing conflict over Kashmir and other border disputes has led to military confrontations and heightened tensions, worsening the strained relationship between the two nations during the Nehruvian era and laying the groundwork for ongoing conflicts and challenges that continue to shape their bilateral interactions for decades.

The independence movement, led by figures such as Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, was deeply rooted in principles of *non-violence* and *civil disobedience*, which subsequently influenced the country's approach to international relations. The Nehruvian Era (1947-1964), established the foundational principles of India's foreign policy under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru's vision was characterised by the principles of non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, and anti-colonialism, aiming to maintain India's sovereignty in a bipolar world divided by the Cold War (Mehrish, 1985, p. 508; Bajpai et al., 2014, p. 16; Schmidt and Chakrabarti, 2021, p. 25). This era also saw India playing a significant role in the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), promoting cooperation among newly independent nations against Western domination (Schmidt and Chakrabarti, 2021, p. 74).

Nehru, a visionary statesman, wisely recognised the potential pitfalls of aligning with either superpower bloc. He firmly believed that such an alliance could compromise India's hard-won sovereignty and impede its ability to pursue an independent path in international affairs. As Nehru himself eloquently articulated, the policy of non-alignment was not a passive stance but an active and dynamic engagement with global issues while maintaining autonomy in decision-making (Alam, 1977, pp. 174-175).

The rationale behind non-alignment was motivated by the imperative to safeguard India's newfound independence and national interests. By avoiding formal military alliances with either superpower, India could preserve its strategic autonomy and avoid becoming entangled in the ideological disputes of the Cold War. Besides, non-alignment was a result of India's historical experiences and anti-colonial struggle. This struggle had instilled a profound aversion to imperialism and domination, making the prospect of aligning with either superpower bloc unpalatable.

In order to operationalise the vision of non-alignment, Nehru and his government crafted a strategic approach ensuring that the nation's newfound independence was not compromised by external pressures and that its national interests remain a priority (Pande, 2017, pp. 34, 105). India's engagement with the world during the Nehruvian Era can be analysed within the framework of three guiding principles: (1) independent decision-making; (2) strategic autonomy; and (3) peaceful coexistence. The first allowed to formulate its foreign policy positions based on its own national interests; the second

underscored India's determination to chart its own course in international relations, free from the dictates of either superpower bloc; while the third meant the *Panchsheel* or Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, co-developed with China in 1954, which established a set of five principles that emphasised mutual respect for territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality, and peaceful resolution of disputes.

The culmination of India's commitment to non-alignment was the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at the Bandung Conference in 1955. India, along with other newly independent nations, sought to create a platform for cooperation and solidarity among countries that shared a common desire to maintain their sovereignty and resist the pressures of superpower domination. The NAM provided a forum for these nations to collectively voice their concerns and advocate for their interests on the global stage (Gehlot, 1990, p. 263).

Nehru's vision of non-alignment was not confined to theoretical discourse; it manifested in tangible actions on the world stage. India actively sought to mediate conflicts and facilitate dialogue between opposing blocs, often playing a crucial role in promoting peaceful resolutions. In the Korean War, India provided medical assistance to both sides (Kim, 2023) and played a pivotal role in negotiating the armistice agreement (Alam, 1977, pp. 175, 180; Engelmeier, 2009, p. 219; Singh, 1992, pp. 221, 234, 243). Similarly, during the Suez Crisis, India unequivocally condemned the Anglo-French invasion of Egypt and ardently supported Egypt's sovereignty (Ashwarya, 2017, p. 26).

India's commitment to peaceful coexistence was further exemplified in its approach to regional conflicts. Nehru endeavoured to establish cordial relations with neighbouring countries, emphasising the importance of regional cooperation. However, this endeavour encountered significant obstacles, particularly in the context of relations with Pakistan, as Ashwarya (2017) explicitly highlights:

India's robust support for Arab causes became progressively intertwined with the notion of reciprocity, as it was argued that India was not bound to support the Arabs unconditionally due to their lack of reciprocal support on crucial matters like Kashmir, the Sino-Indian War, and the Indo-Pakistani War. The denial of India's entry into the first Islamic summit in Rabat in 1969, instigated by Pakistan, further

fuelled calls for reevaluating India's pro-Arab policy, as it was perceived by some as a demonstration of Arab indifference to India's national interests. (Ashwarya, 2017, p. 35)

The unresolved issue of Kashmir and persistent border disputes led to multiple military confrontations between the two nations, underscoring the complexities and challenges inherent in India's pursuit of regional stability.

While non-alignment proved to be a guiding principle for India's foreign policy during the Nehruvian era, it was not without its detractors and challenges. Some critics contended that non-alignment was a form of moral posturing that failed to adequately address India's security concerns (Kochhar and Ulman, 2020, p. 10; Basrur, 2017, p. 21). The Sino-Indian War of 1962, in which India suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of China, exposed the limitations of non-alignment when confronted with a direct threat from a major power (Ashwarya, 2017, p. 230; S. Singh, 2019, p. 206). In the aftermath of the war, India sought closer ties with the Soviet Union, which provided military and economic assistance, thus leading to a perceived deviation from the strict adherence to non-alignment.

Moreover, some argued that non-alignment did not always align with India's economic interests. The emphasis on self-reliance and import substitution industrialisation, while aimed at achieving economic independence, resulted in a relatively slow pace of economic growth and technological advancement. The limited engagement with Western markets restricted India's access to capital and technology, potentially hindering its economic development (Mohan and Padmanabhan, 2022, pp. 23-24).

Nehru's foreign policy, characterised by non-alignment and peaceful coexistence, laid the foundation for India's subsequent diplomatic strategies. The principles enshrined in this policy continue to inform India's approach to international relations, shaping its engagement with the world. India remains a staunch advocate for multilateralism, a rules-based international order, and the peaceful resolution of disputes, reflecting the enduring legacy of Nehru's vision.

4.1.2. Gandhian Era (1966-1989)

The second phase, the Gandhian Era marked by the tenure of Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister (1966-1977, 1980-1984) and his son Rajiv Gandhi (1984-1989), witnessed a more assertive stance on regional issues and significant shifts in India's foreign policy (S. Singh, 2019, p. 1). Indira Gandhi's approach included the strategic realignment during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War, where India signed a *Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation* with the Soviet Union, signalling a departure from strict non-alignment (Ashwarya, 2017, pp. 41-42; Jain, 2010, pp. 107-108; S. Singh, 2019, p. 14). The treaty not only provided India with critical military and political support during the conflict with Pakistan but also signalled India's willingness to engage in pragmatic alliances to secure its national interests (Singh, 2013, p. 74). This period also saw India's first nuclear test in 1974, demonstrating its intent to establish itself as a regional power (Jain, 2010, p. 109).

Even though initially perceived as peripheral due to its perceived lack of significant natural resources and economic leverage, South Asia gained strategic importance following India's conflicts with China in 1962 and Pakistan in 1971 (Jain, 2010, pp. 107, 109). These conflicts cemented India's alignment with the Soviet Union through the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation, which strained relations with the United States, particularly during the Nixon administration (Jain, 2010, p. 107).

The 1971 war, which resulted in the establishment of Bangladesh, was a turning point in South Asian geopolitics. It was thanks to India's military and ideological assistance to East Pakistan (to be named Bangladesh) that it was able to secede from Pakistan and become an independent state. This war greatly deteriorated the relations between India and Pakistan solidifying the perpetual rivalry between India and Pakistan. Enhancing India's position as a key regional power capable of shaping outcomes in its immediate neighbourhood, the war and independence of Bangladesh demonstrated India's capability to influence regional dynamics and assert its strategic interests (Singh, 2013, p. 61).

India's strategic decision to move towards the Soviet Union was a key factor in its success during the 1971 war. The treaty with the Soviet Union provided India with

security against Chinese intervention and international censure, allowing it to take decisive action in East Pakistan. Moreover, Soviet deterrence and its veto power in the Security Council provided India with the leverage necessary to achieve its objectives. This shift towards the Soviet Union marked a significant departure from India's previous foreign policy orientation, distancing it from the West, particularly the United States, which had supported Pakistan during the war (Pant and Super, 2015, p. 753). Indira Gandhi's decisive leadership during this period highlighted her readiness to adopt a more interventionist policy when deemed necessary.

Another significant development during Indira Gandhi's tenure was India's first nuclear test in 1974, code-named "Smiling Buddha" (Kochhar and Ulman, 2020, p. 20). This move was a clear demonstration of India's intent to establish itself as a regional power with a credible deterrence capability. The nuclear test was a response to both regional security concerns and global nuclear politics, signalling India's desire to maintain strategic autonomy and enhance its security posture. The test was a significant departure from India's previous stance on nuclear disarmament and marked a shift towards a more assertive and self-reliant defence policy (Malone et al., 2015, p. 149).

Indira Gandhi's foreign policy also reflected her efforts to strengthen India's position within the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). While maintaining the rhetoric of non-alignment, her tenure saw a pragmatic approach to international relations, where India balanced its commitments to NAM with strategic engagements that served its national interests. This dual approach allowed India to navigate the complexities of Cold War politics effectively, maintaining its leadership role among developing nations while forging critical alliances.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989) marked a pivotal shift in US policy towards South Asia, prompting substantial military aid to Pakistan to counter Soviet influence in the region (Jaffrelot, 2002, pp. 69, 265). This support inadvertently bolstered Pakistan's military capabilities and facilitated its pursuit of nuclear weapons, further complicating regional dynamics (Jaffrelot, 2002, pp. 79-80, 125; Jain, 2010, p. 108). In response, India accelerated its arms purchases from both France and the Soviet Union, including a substantial agreement with the Soviet Union for the transfer of defence equipment (Pant and Super, 2015, p. 754).

Furthermore, Indira Gandhi's tenure was characterised by an increased focus on regional cooperation and the assertion of India's leadership in South Asia. Her government actively engaged in diplomatic initiatives to resolve regional conflicts and foster economic cooperation. The establishment of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) in 1985, though after her tenure, was a continuation of her vision for regional collaboration (Dash, 2008). Similarly, while Rajiv Gandhi's election brought a renewed interest in reducing dependence on Soviet arms and fostering warmer ties with the United States, economic limitations and the challenges of shifting to western suppliers continued to favour Soviet offers. Throughout the Cold War, India maintained a strong relationship with the Soviet Union, characterised by collaboration in various sectors, including economic development, technology transfer, and defence cooperation (Pant and Super, 2015, p. 754).

In summary, the period under Indira Gandhi's leadership was marked by a significant shift towards a more assertive and pragmatic foreign policy. Her strategic realignment during the Bangladesh Liberation War, the initiation of India's nuclear program, and her nuanced engagement with the NAM illustrated a flexible approach to safeguarding India's interests. These developments underscored India's emergence as a formidable regional power and set the stage for subsequent foreign policy strategies. Both her and her son's tenures consequently represent a critical phase in the evolution of India's foreign policy, characterised by a blend of idealism and pragmatism, which continues to influence India's diplomatic posture.

4.1.3. Post-Cold War Era (1991-2014)

The third phase, the Post-Cold War Period, spanning from the end of the Cold War in 1991 to the ascension of the BJP in 2014, was characterised by economic liberalisation and the strategic recalibration of India's international relations. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) necessitated a reorientation of India's foreign policy. Under Prime Ministers P.V. Narasimha Rao (1991-1996) of INC and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the BJP's first prime minister (1998-2004), India embarked on economic reforms, opened its markets to global trade, and sought closer ties with the United States and other Western countries (Ashwarya, 2017, pp. 73-74; Basrur, 2017, p. 8). This era also included significant developments such as the "Look East Policy,"

aiming to strengthen economic and strategic ties with Southeast Asian nations (Ashwarya, 2017, p. 74; Gupta et al., 2019, p. 30; Rao, 2022, p. 46).

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 instigated in a new era of international relations, marked by the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a unipolar world order dominated by the United States. For India, a staunch advocate of non-alignment throughout the Cold War, this seismic shift in the global landscape necessitated a profound reassessment of its foreign policy priorities and strategies. Nonetheless, although the original context in which non-alignment was conceived had fundamentally changed, its underlying principles of *strategic autonomy* and *independent decision-making* remained pertinent. Therefore, India adapted its foreign policy to the evolving geopolitical landscape, continuing to pursue a multi-vector approach, engaging with all major powers while safeguarding its national interests.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, a long-standing ally and a key pillar of India's non-aligned foreign policy, created a strategic vacuum that India had to navigate. This period of transition was characterised by several domestic and international factors, including the rise of new economic powers, the resurgence of regional conflicts, and the growing threat of transnational terrorism. Nonetheless, the long-held policy of non-alignment, carefully developed by India during the Cold War, found itself increasingly unsustainable in the unipolar world that emerged after the Soviet Union's collapse. The rigid ideological framework that underpinned non-alignment became less relevant in the new global order. Consequently, India embarked on a series of strategic recalibrations, adopting a more pragmatic approach to international relations.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao (1991-1996), India embarked on a path of economic liberalisation, opening its markets to global trade and investment. This marked a significant departure from the inward-looking, state-controlled economic model that had characterised the Nehruvian era. Economic liberalisation was seen as a means to accelerate India's economic growth, reduce poverty, and integrate the country into the global economy.

The economic reforms also had profound implications for India's foreign policy. The increasing interconnectedness fostered by globalisation presented both challenges

and opportunities. India, eager to capitalise on its vast human resource potential and promising industrial base, sought to attract foreign investment, technology transfer, and access to global markets. This newfound pragmatism necessitated forging partnerships with former ideological adversaries, marking a significant departure from the non-aligned posture of the past. The need to attract foreign investment and access global markets led to a greater emphasis on economic diplomacy. India actively engaged with international economic institutions like the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and regional trade blocs such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). This pragmatic yet strategic shift towards economic diplomacy contrasted markedly with the inward-looking, self-reliant approach emphasised during the Cold War era.

The rise of China as a major economic and military power presented a new set of challenges for India's foreign policy. The border dispute between the two nations persisted, and China's growing influence in South Asia was a cause for concern. However, India also sought to engage with China on issues of common interest, such as trade and climate change, recognising the importance of maintaining a constructive relationship with its powerful neighbour.

Simultaneously, India sought to diversify its international relations, engaging more actively with East and Southeast Asia through the "Look East Policy" initiated by Prime Minister Narasimha Rao. This policy aimed to strengthen economic and strategic ties with the ASEAN countries, leveraging cultural and historical links to foster deeper regional integration. The Look East Policy was a recognition of the shifting economic and geopolitical centre of gravity towards Asia and was instrumental in enhancing India's role in regional forums like the ASEAN Regional Forum (Malone et al., 2015, pp. 32, 416, 556-571).

India actively sought to expand its influence and secure partnerships beyond its immediate neighbourhood. The "Look East Policy", launched in 1991, aimed to strengthen ties with Southeast Asian nations. This eastward expansion reflected a conscious shift away from non-alignment and towards a more proactive approach to regional security dynamics. India's participation in regional forums like the East Asia Summit (EAS) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) aimed to foster closer economic and security cooperation. India saw potential not only for increased trade but also for

collaborative efforts to ensure the security of vital sea lanes in the region. This strategic shift reflected a growing recognition of the interconnectedness of regional security and economic prosperity. Ultimately, this strategy aimed to create a strategic counterweight to China's growing dominance in the Indo-Pacific region, demonstrating India's growing assertiveness on the world stage.

The post-Cold War period also saw India pursuing a more pragmatical and assertive policy towards its immediate neighbourhood. The "Gujral Doctrine," articulated by Prime Minister I.K. Gujral (1997-1998), emphasised unilateral concessions and non-reciprocal gestures towards neighbouring countries to build trust and enhance regional stability. This approach aimed to address longstanding tensions and foster a cooperative environment in South Asia (Malone et al., 2015, pp. 184-185).

The post-Cold War period was thus a time of flux and transformation for Indian foreign policy. The end of the bipolar world order, coupled with domestic economic reforms and emerging security challenges, compelled India to adopt a more pragmatic and multi-dimensional approach to international relations. This period laid the foundation for India's subsequent emergence as a significant global player and set the stage for the influence of Hindu nationalist ideologies on its foreign policy under the BJP government.

Under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's BJP government (1998-2004), India's foreign policy witnessed further consolidation and strategic depth. Vajpayee's tenure was marked by the 1998 nuclear tests, which declared India a nuclear weapons state and significantly altered its strategic posture. These tests were justified on grounds of national security and deterrence, particularly in the context of regional adversaries like China and Pakistan. The subsequent imposition of international sanctions and India's diplomatic efforts to navigate through them underscored its determination to maintain strategic autonomy (Malone et al., 2015, pp. 316, 368, 417-418).

Talbott (2004), indicates that during the early days of the first BJP government, prime minister Vajpayee's friend and adviser Jaswant Singh, serving as the de facto foreign minister, played a pivotal role in the notable shift in India's foreign policy towards a more assertive stance. This shift involved justifying nuclear tests to address the security vacuum post-Soviet Union and establish India as a key global nuclear player; strengthening ties with the US to gain legitimacy and support for India's nuclear program,

portraying it as a regional stabiliser; and focusing on countering threats, particularly from China, to position India as a key regional power (Talbot, 2004, pp. 82,83).

India's nuclearisation led rivalling Pakistan to take similar steps, as well. In the wake of their respective nuclear tests in May 1998, a period of intensified geopolitical competition unfolded between India and Pakistan. This development prompted a strategic recalibration by Pakistan, aimed at achieving parity with its nuclear-armed neighbour. Consequently, Pakistan adopted a more assertive foreign policy, prioritising the expansion of its global political and strategic influence. Pakistani leader General Musharraf spearheaded this shift, actively pursuing diplomatic initiatives to forge stronger ties with a diverse array of regions: Turkestan, Türkiye and the Middle East, the Gulf, and Southeast Asia. These state visits aimed to solidify international support for Musharraf's military government, while simultaneously garnering moral and diplomatic backing on the contentious issue of Kashmir from these strategically significant regions (Jain, 2010, p. 25).

It can be asserted that following the end of the Cold War, the BJP's Hindutva ideology started profoundly influencing India's foreign policy, particularly in its stance towards Islam, Pakistan, and terrorism (Hall, 2019, p. 4). The Hindutva perspective, as articulated by prominent figures such as Jaswant Singh, has portrayed Hindu civilisation as inherently egalitarian and inclusive, which contrasted sharply with a negative depiction of Islam. This ideological framework views Islam as inherently chauvinistic and expansionist, a perspective that implies a fundamental incompatibility with Indian society (Talbot, 2004, p. 134).

This ideological stance has significant implications for India's relations with Pakistan. Pakistan is frequently characterised as the embodiment of the aggressive and intolerant aspects of radical Islam. In contrast, India, under the Hindutva ideology, is depicted as a symbol of the benign and tolerant aspects of Hinduism. This dichotomy has led to a more confrontational and suspicious approach towards Pakistan, viewing it not just as a geopolitical adversary but as a civilisational opponent (Talbot, 2004, p. 134).

Although the Vajpayee era also witnessed efforts to improve relations with Pakistan, the harsh conflicts and mutual suspicions endured. The Lahore Summit in 1999 and the Agra Summit in 2001 were notable attempts at fostering dialogue and resolving

disputes. However, these efforts were often disrupted by incidents like the Kargil War in 1999 and the attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001, highlighting the complex and volatile nature of India-Pakistan relations (Ganguly and Kapur, 2010).

In the context of terrorism, the BJP's Hindutva ideology tends to link terrorism with radical Islam, further straining relations with Muslim-majority nations and impacting India's global diplomatic strategies. This perspective influences India's domestic and international policies, fostering a narrative that frames the fight against terrorism as a broader cultural and civilisational struggle. Overall, it can be asserted that the Hindutva ideology under the BJP has contributed to a foreign policy that is more assertive and less conciliatory towards Islamic countries, particularly Pakistan, shaping a narrative of cultural and religious conflict that underscores India's strategic and diplomatic decisions.

Due to the geopolitical shifts following the Cold War that fundamentally reshaped India's foreign policy, the country moved away from the rigid principles of non-alignment, embracing a more pragmatic and multidimensional approach. Economic growth, regional security concerns, and a proactive engagement with the Indo-Pacific region became central pillars of India's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. Beyond economic considerations, the post-Cold War environment presented new security challenges. The rise of China as a major power, with its growing economic and military capabilities, compelled India to reassess its strategic posture. China has been seen as a formidable potential adversary for India, possessing significant nuclear capabilities. In line with this positioning, India's nuclear tests were justified as a necessary measure to correct the "disequilibrium" in the Asian nuclear balance. By establishing a nuclear counterweight, India aimed to balance Chinese power and enhance its own security standing in the region (Talbot, 2004, p. 82; Jain, 2010, p. 59).

The unresolved border disputes and ongoing tensions with Pakistan further underscored the need for a robust regional security architecture. This shift in focus and a need to counterbalance China's growing influence required India to strengthen its military capabilities, modernise its defence equipment, and forge strategic partnerships with countries like Vietnam and Japan. This security calculus, driven by realpolitik considerations in the region, stood in stark contrast to the primarily ideological concerns

that dominated India's foreign policy during the Cold War. The rise of China as a major economic and military power, coupled with unresolved border disputes and ongoing tensions with Pakistan presented new challenges for India in the security realm, and necessitated a reassessment of India's strategic posture. Therefore, one of the most notable shifts during this period was the strategic rapprochement with the United States. The Indo-U.S. relationship, which had been strained during the Cold War, began to improve significantly in the post-Cold War era. This transformation was driven by mutual interests in economic cooperation, technology transfer, and counter-terrorism. The signing of the Indo-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement in 2008 was a landmark event, symbolising the growing strategic partnership between the two countries.

In conclusion, the post-Cold War period witnessed a transformative epoch in Indian foreign policy, which was distinguished by the diversification of its international partnerships, active engagement in regional frameworks, and a more assertive stance on matters of national security, underscoring the country's response to the evolving global order. This period served as a pivotal juncture in India's rise as a global player, establishing a foundation upon which the subsequent influence of Hindu nationalist ideologies, under the BJP government, would be built. The cumulative impact of these developments emphasises the significance of this period in shaping India's evolving role in the global arena.

4.1.4. Modian Era (2014-present)

The year 2014 marked a watershed moment in Indian foreign policy with the BJP ascending to power under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This transition prompted in a distinct era, characterised by the infusion of Hindu nationalist ideologies, known as Hindutva, into the fabric of India's international relations. While building upon the economic and strategic priorities of the post-Cold War era, the Modi government has infused its foreign policy with cultural and civilisational narratives, reflecting a deeper ideological shift.

In order to effectively structure this era, BJP's policies should be situated within the framework of *Panchamrit*, and the effects of Modi's persona and Hindutva ideology on shaping these policies could be explored. Subsequently, Modi's domestic policies guided by Hindutva and the regional implications of Hindutva, with a specific focus on

India-Pakistan relations and Kashmir should be analysed. Finally, the global dimensions of Hindutva, including India's participation in global initiatives like Make in India and the Quad should be discussed.

Focusing on restoring India's global standing and deepening international engagement, India's foreign policy has become bold, proactive, and aligned with national economic goals under Modi's leadership. The government has emphasised five pillars of foreign policy: (1) "*Samman* – dignity and honour; (2) *Samvad* – greater engagement and dialogue; (3) *Samriddhi* – shared prosperity; (4) *Suraksha* – regional and global security; and (5) *Sanskriti evam Sabhyata* – cultural and civilisational linkages', forming the *Panchamrit* framework (BJP, 2015) to replace Nehruvian Panchsheel. *Panchamrit* is a religious term that literally translates to "five elixir of immortality" or "five ambrosias" often used in Hindu rituals and traditions to refer to a mixture of five sacred substances: curd or yogurt, clarified butter (i.e. *ghee*), honey, milk, and sugar (Basrur, 2017, p. 11; Gupta et al., 2019 p. 8). Exploited by the Hindutva politics, this framework is a clear indication of how Hindu nationalism articulates into Indian foreign policy (Hall, 2019, pp. 9, 19, 96, 154).

Under this framework, BJP has prioritised strengthening India's relationships with major powers and regional neighbours, prioritising a secure environment, economic development, and global leadership in multilateral forums (Madhav, 2018; Hall, 2019, pp. 3-10, 115-118). Modi's initiatives such as "Make in India" campaign and "Act East" policy, which aims to attract global investments and enhance India's international stature, are seen as practical applications of Panchamrit framework. The government emphasis on the cultural diplomacy and efforts to unify the Indian diaspora further aims to solidify India's global influence (BJP, 2015; Madhav, 2018).

Gandhi (2022) examines the imagery surrounding Prime Minister Narendra Modi, portraying him as a figure of devotion akin to *bhakti* traditions⁵⁸ in Hinduism. She emphasises that Modi's governance utilises symbolism and spectacle, projecting him as

⁵⁸ The *Bhakti* (i.e. devotion or participation) tradition emphasises a deep, personal connection between a devotee and a chosen deity. This direct relationship contrasts with the path of knowledge (i.e. *jnana*) and the path of ritual and good works (i.e. *karma*). Gandhi's comment reflects that Modi is admired by the masses as a deeply spiritual person dedicated to the faith.

a divine ruler akin to historical *rajarshis* (sage-kings), which blends modernity with nativist imagery to bolster his political authority (Gandhi, 2022). The leadership of Narendra Modi exemplifies the “masculinisation” of Hindu nationalist discourse, reflecting the militaristic ethos of the RSS and the broader Sangh Parivar (Ahmed, 2021 p. 124). Modi’s background as an RSS *pracharak* (propagandist) (Kinnvall, 2019; Shani, 2021) instilled in him the organisation’s militaristic culture prioritising the martial aspects of Hinduism over Gandhian notions of *ahimsa* (non-violence) (Bannerji, 2006, p. 383; Banerjee, 2012, p. 72). This ideology relying on the foundation of the Sangh Parivar’s “muscular nationalism” (Banerjee, 2012, p. 46) portrays Modi as a guardian of the nation’s honour and as a symbolic embodiment of the masculine, militaristic Hindu nation envisioned by Hindutva proponents. Modi’s self-presentation during elections as the sole protector of “Bharat Mata” from external threats encapsulates this ideology (Ahmed, 2021, p. 166) and mirrors the RSS’s vision of a robust Hindu nation, promoting a vision of a strong, assertive India that can stand up to both internal and external threats.

This “muscular nationalism” has had significant implications for both domestic and international policies, as it redefines India’s national identity and foreign policy. Domestically, the BJP’s policies, such as the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC), have sparked debates about the inclusivity and diversity of India’s social and political landscape. These policies have raised concerns about the marginalisation of Muslim communities and the erosion of secular principles, potentially redefining Indian identity in exclusively Hindu terms (Jaffrelot, 2021, pp. 374-376). Actions such as the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in 2019, which granted special autonomous status to the region and alleged interference in Baluchistan are highlighted as consequences of Hindutva ideology (Jaffrelot, 2021, pp. 166, 169, 316, 360; Syed, 2023, pp. 62-63). The rise of Hindutva ideology and the perceived sidelining of India’s Muslim population evidently complicate India’s relations with Muslim-majority countries.

Internationally, India’s foreign policy is increasingly characterised by a growing assertiveness on the world stage. This trend is evident in its stance against emanating from regions bordering Pakistan (Jain, 2010, p. 70; Talbott, 2004, pp. 119, 134) aggravated by the instability caused by historical and ongoing American interventions in the region, its challenges to China’s territorial claims, and its potential leadership role in regional

organisations. The relationship between Hindutva and India's foreign policy towards Pakistan is crucial for understanding the military modernisation and assertiveness under BJP governments. Syed (2023) posits that Hindutva ideology serves as a driving force behind India's pursuit of enhanced military capabilities. This emphasis on military strength is perceived as essential for achieving regional dominance, particularly in the context of historical tensions with Pakistan. The challenges in confidence-building measures (CBMs) are also addressed, arguing that Hindutva's nationalist underpinnings pose significant obstacles to non-military CBMs such as trade and cultural exchanges, which are vital for normalising relations but are often disrupted due to escalating geopolitical tensions (Syed, 2023, p. 68). Syed further suggests that Hindutva ideology justifies "surgical strikes" as necessary actions to counter perceived threats, thereby limiting the potential for diplomatic avenues to resolve conflicts peacefully (Syed, 2023, p. 69). These actions exacerbate existing mistrust, elevate regional security concerns, and ultimately destabilise South Asia. The absence of meaningful dialogue, diplomacy, and CBMs has contributed to this escalation. International mediation and support are essential in addressing these challenges. To maintain regional stability, it remains crucial to adopt a balanced approach that combines military preparedness with diplomatic efforts (Syed, 2023, pp. 74-76) since ongoing security challenges, including unresolved border disputes with China and Pakistan, and internal threats like terrorism and the Maoist insurgency (Jain, 2010, pp. xviii, 12) should be faced. Addressing these issues requires a combination of diplomatic engagement, refined counterinsurgency strategies, and a focus on social and economic development in affected regions (Jaffrelot, 2021, p. 401).

In the broader context, The Hindutva phenomenon can also be explored within the broader context of global far-right movements. Criticising the Hindutva nationalist agenda, which fuels persecution against marginalised groups like Muslims and perpetuates environmental degradation through land appropriation and relaxed regulations, Supriya Gandhi (2022) asserts that Hindutva shares ideological and strategic affinities with other global far-right movements like "white nationalism." This includes mutual support between leaders such as Modi and Donald Trump, highlighting transnational connections in authoritarian governance strategies. Nonetheless, Hindutva under Modi aligns with neoliberal economic policies rather than opposing them. This

alignment supports a vision of India as a global economic leader while consolidating centralised authority under Modi's leadership (Gandhi, 2022).

In this sense, it is worth noting that the historical notion of India as a global teacher, or *vishwaguru*, reemerges in contemporary Indian foreign policy under Modi's government (Alam, 2024, p. 96). Arising in the 19th century as a response to colonial hierarchies, the *vishwaguru* ideal, as championed by figures like Swami Vivekananda, emphasised India's cultural and philosophical contributions. Tracing the lineage of this notion in both Nehruvian and Hindutva politics, Estrada (2023) asserts that India's foreign policy reflects this legacy, balancing its democratic identity with a strong sense of national heritage, particularly in the context of Modi's leadership (p. 453).

Utilising both cultural events and the Indian diaspora, the Modi government's cultural diplomacy has been trying to improve India's global profile. While Hindutva ideology poses a potential challenge, the government initiatives like International Yoga Day have helped strengthen India's image as a major cultural force promoting inclusivity and avoiding alienating other countries (Tharoor, 2018, p. 203; McCartney, 2019). In this respect, cultural diplomacy has been an instrumental aspect of Modi's foreign policy in showcasing India's civilisational heritage and promoting its soft power. The government has also strategically engaged with the Indian diaspora to enhance India's global influence, foster economic ties, and promote cultural exchange (Varadarajan, 2019, p. 127)..

Under the BJP government led by Narendra Modi, India's foreign policy has witnessed a strategic shift towards economic diplomacy and enhanced regional security, marking a departure from the traditional Non-Alignment approach. This reorientation of national interests reflects India's broader ambitions to assert itself as a major global player in a multipolar world. Modi's administration has prioritised leveraging India's economic growth to bolster its global influence, exemplified by initiatives such as "Make in India" (2014), which aims to transform India into a global manufacturing hub by attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and boosting domestic production (Thussu, 2013, p. 158; Hall, 2019, pp. 109-115). This initiative, along with India's participation in regional trade agreements like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), underscores a more assertive pursuit of economic objectives on the global stage (Gupta

et al., 2019, pp. 17; Beretta et al., 2023, pp. 183-184, 220-222). However, challenges such as infrastructure development, regulatory reforms, and skill enhancement remain critical to fully realising these goals.

In parallel, Modi's government has placed significant emphasis on strengthening India's defence capabilities and expanding its role as a regional security provider. This is evident in the increased defence spending, modernisation of the armed forces, and strategic partnerships with key Indo-Pacific nations like the United States, Japan, and Australia. The revival of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) reflects India's strategic pivot towards the Indo-Pacific region, aimed at counterbalancing China's growing influence. India's approach under Modi also highlights a multi-vector foreign policy, where the country seeks to diversify its alliances—deepening ties with the US while maintaining its longstanding relationship with Russia for critical military technology (Beretta et al., 2023, p. 128; Aras and Kandemir, 2023d).

While these strategic partnerships have bolstered India's global standing, concerns about democratic erosion within the country remains. Estrada (2023) argues that India's aspiration to become a global leader both challenges the exclusionary tendencies of the Western-dominated liberal international order and faces resistance from it. Ultimately, she calls for a critical examination of social hierarchies within both India and globally, advocating for a collaborative global leadership that transcends claims of superiority and embraces inclusivity (Estrada, 2023, p. 455).

The rise of the BJP under Narendra Modi has introduced new dynamics into India's foreign policy, marked by economic diplomacy, strategic realignments, and the influence of Hindu nationalist perspectives. While building upon the foundations laid by previous administrations, the BJP government has sought to assert India's role as a major global player with a unique cultural identity. This phase reflects both continuity and change as India steers through an evolving global order aiming to protect its national interests while promoting its values and aspirations on the international stage.

4.2. EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS TÜRKİYE

India's evolution of foreign policy mirrors its relationship particularly with Türkiye, which is characterised by a series of distinct historical phases, each shaped by

unique events, key figures, and evolving national interests. This section analyses the multidimensional nature of this relationship, tracing its path from initial warmth to Cold War estrangement, renewed engagement in the post-Cold War era, and deepening economic ties with lingering political challenges.

4.2.1. Phase I: Initial Warmth and Cold War Estrangement (1947-1965)

The initial phase of India-Türkiye relations, spanning from India's independence in 1947 to the mid-1960s, was characterised by a complex interplay of nascent warmth and growing estrangement. While the early years were marked by mutual goodwill and shared aspirations, the geopolitical realities of the Cold War and diverging foreign policy orientations gradually strained the relationship.

The foundation of India-Türkiye relations was laid during the interwar period, as both nations grappled with the challenges of state-building and modernisation. The shared experience of struggling against colonial powers fostered a sense of camaraderie, and there was admiration for Kemal Atatürk, who spearheaded Türkiye's modernisation efforts (Pasha, 2006). Prior to his Prime Ministry, Nehru's visit to Türkiye in 1930s, partly for sightseeing and partly to study the Kemalist experiment in secularism, exemplified the initial warmth in the relationship (Pande, 2017). In the early years following India's independence, this goodwill translated into diplomatic, cultural, and educational exchanges. In 1951, Maulana Azad, the first Minister of Education of the independent India, visited Türkiye and signed a cultural agreement to establish the "Turkish-Indian Cultural Association" (Aslan, 2022, p. 125). The inclusion of Türkiye in the of the Indian Council of Cultural Cooperation further facilitated educational ties between the two nations (Andrabi, 2014; Mehta, 2019).

However, the onset of the Cold War and the bipolar division of the world soon began to cast a shadow over this emerging friendship. India, under Nehru's leadership, embraced a policy of non-alignment, which earned India respect as a major player in the non-aligned world and a leader in the fight for decolonisation. It enabled India to focus on domestic development while actively participating in international organisations like the United Nations and playing a mediating role in various conflicts (Malone, 2011, p. 37). Non-alignment did not equate to neutrality; India maintained close ties with the Soviet Union due to shared strategic interests, particularly in containing China's growing

influence. However, India was not beholden to the Soviet Union and pursued its own foreign policy objectives. In contrast, Türkiye, driven by security concerns and historical distrust of Russia, aligned itself with the Western bloc, founded the Baghdad Pact (later the Central Treaty Organisation [CENTO]) with British Empire, Pakistan, Empire of Iran and Kingdom of Iraq in 1955 and hosted the headquarters from 1958 until its dissolution (Brands, 2006; Mehta, 2019). This pro-Western stance clashed with India's commitment to non-alignment, creating a fundamental ideological divergence.

Moreover, Türkiye's growing relationship with Pakistan, solidified by the 1954 Treaty of Eternal Friendship, became a major source of friction with India. The Kashmir dispute, a longstanding point of contention between India and Pakistan, further complicated the situation, as Türkiye consistently supported Pakistan's position (Dash, 2008). India viewed Türkiye's alignment with Pakistan, its arch-rival, with suspicion and resentment. The contrasting visions and priorities of key figures like Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, and Adnan Menderes, Türkiye's Prime Minister during the 1950s, played a crucial role in shaping the divergent paths of the two nations during this phase. Nehru's emphasis on non-alignment and maintaining equidistance from both superpowers clashed with Menderes' leadership in aligning Türkiye with the Western bloc (Brands, 2006). Taking place just days before the infamous military coup d'état⁵⁹, the first prime ministerial visit from India to Türkiye, Nehru's arrival in 20-24 May 1960, marked a renewed focus on strengthening bilateral ties. This was not primarily due to Menderes' alleged shift towards non-aligned thinking, but rather to his belief that Nehru, whom Menderes considered an "evangelical neutralist", was gradually aligning with Cold War power politics, particularly in light of the India-China border conflict (Aslan, 2022, p. 126). Although, such fundamental difference in foreign policy orientation created a significant obstacle to closer cooperation, Türkiye did not abstain from offering military aid to India during the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962 (Blarel, 2014, p. 157), nonetheless backed up upon Pakistan's protest (Mehta, 2019, p. 3).

⁵⁹ Adnan Menderes, the democratically elected prime minister of Türkiye, was executed in 1961 by the military junta that seized power on May 27, 1960. This makes him the first and only democratic leader in the Western Bloc to be killed by a NATO member army.

The Kashmir dispute emerged as a major point of contention, with Türkiye's unwavering support for Pakistan stemming from shared Islamic heritage and geopolitical considerations (Dash, 2008). This issue not only strained bilateral relations but also hampered potential collaboration on regional security and stability, as Türkiye together with the Imperial Iran provided Pakistan with ammunitions, guns and jet fuel during the India-Pakistan Conflict in 1965 (Blarel, 2014, p. 157).

Influenced by their unique geopolitical contexts and strategic priorities, India and Türkiye followed remarkably distinct foreign policy paths during the Cold-War. Bishku (2016) highlights that India's non-aligned stance at this period contrasted with Türkiye's alignment with the West, shaped by its NATO membership. Moreover, Cohen (2001) emphasises that India's role in containing communism internally was more critical to the West than its frontline status, unlike Türkiye (p. 24). While Türkiye was integrated into Western military alliances as a staunch NATO ally and a founding member of the Baghdad Pact and CENTO, India maintained a non-aligned stance under the leadership of Nehru adopting socialist policies such as state-led economic planning and land reforms. This stance of India remained intriguingly untouched by the West since the India's stability was crucial in preventing the spread of communism in South Asia, particularly given its vast and diverse population, which included significant peasant and working-class movements that could potentially fuel a communist revolution. As a result, India's ability to manage internal dissent and maintain order was deemed more important than its formal alignment with either bloc. Therefore, it can be asserted that the West adopted a pragmatic approach, overlooking India's socialist rhetoric and policies as long as the country continued to function as a buffer against the spread of Soviet influence in the region. This strategic tolerance allowed India to pursue its own development path while still contributing to the broader Western goal of containing communism during the Cold War, albeit in a different manner than Türkiye.

The early years of India-Türkiye relations were marked by warmth and estrangement. While the shared experience of state-building and modernisation initially fostered goodwill, the Cold War's geopolitical realities and diverging foreign policy orientations, particularly on issues like Kashmir and non-alignment, gradually pushed the two nations apart. This early phase laid the groundwork for the complex and evolving relationship that would characterise the subsequent decades.

4.2.2. Phase II: Gradual Thaw and Pursuit of Economic Interests (1965-1980s)

The second phase in India-Türkiye relations, spanning from the mid-1960s to 1980, was a period of gradual thawing and an increasing focus on economic cooperation. This shift was partly influenced by Indira Gandhi's tenure in India, which saw a more assertive foreign policy characterised by strategic realignments, the initiation of India's nuclear program, and a nuanced engagement with the NAM (Blarel, 2014, p. 283). India's nuclear tests in 1974, while demonstrating its regional power and strategic autonomy, also drew international condemnation and sanctions, highlighting the complexities of its foreign policy decisions (Blarel, 2014, p. iii).

The geopolitical landscape of the late 1960s and 1970s witnessed a softening of Cold War tensions and the emergence of new global economic trends. These shifts, coupled with evolving domestic priorities in both countries, created an environment conducive to a re-evaluation of bilateral ties. However, despite the growing emphasis on economic interests, deep-rooted political differences continued to impede the full potential of the relationship (Pasha, 2006).

The gradual thaw in relations began with diplomatic initiatives aimed at bridging the gap between the two nations. Turkish Foreign Minister İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil's visit to India in 1968 marked a significant step towards rapprochement. During this visit, both sides acknowledged shared interests in regional stability, economic development, and cultural exchange. They expressed a desire to move beyond past tensions and explore avenues for cooperation, particularly in the economic sphere (Aslan, 2022).

However, the legacy of the 1965 Indo-Pakistani War, during which Türkiye had supported Pakistan, cast a long shadow over the relationship. India's concerns about Türkiye's close ties with Pakistan and its stance on the Kashmir dispute remained unresolved (Dash, 2008). Moreover, the INC government's position within the Islamic world was severely weakened after Türkiye, which then held a friendlier position towards Israel than India, supported Pakistan, along with Iran and Jordan, in expelling the Indian delegation from the Rabat Summit Conference, the precursor to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The conference was convened by the representatives of Muslim communities in response to the Al-Aqsa Mosque incident. This fiasco drew harsh criticism from the right-wing opposition in India (Akhtar, 1969). Although, Türkiye and

Iran did not allow Pakistani jets to use their bases during the 1971 East Pakistan Crisis, US organised to supply its fighter jets to be used against India by the West Pakistan through Türkiye, Jordan and Iran (Blarel, 2014, p. 185). On the other hand, the ongoing Cyprus conflict, with Türkiye's support for the Turkish Cypriot community and India's backing of the Greek Cypriot government, continued to be a point of contention (Pasha, 2006; Aslan, 2022, p. 131; Mehta, 2019).

Despite lingering political disagreements, the pursuit of economic interests propelled India and Türkiye towards renewed engagement in the late 1960s and 1970s. Both nations were undergoing significant economic shifts: Türkiye, under Prime Minister Turgut Özal, embraced economic liberalisation to seek new markets and investments, while India gradually opened its mixed economy (Mehta, 2019).

Özal as a key figure in this thaw, recognised India's economic potential and actively pursued closer ties (Mehta, 2019). His visit to India in 1986, accompanied by a business delegation, marked a turning point, focusing on expanding bilateral trade and investment. Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi reciprocated the visit in 1988, further strengthening the economic relationship (Mehta, 2019). This mutual interest in economic growth and diversification laid the groundwork for deeper collaboration, even as political differences persisted.

The emphasis on economic cooperation was driven by a convergence of interests. Türkiye sought new avenues for trade and investment to fuel its economic growth; while India saw Türkiye as a potential partner in its own economic development efforts. This mutual desire for economic prosperity created a foundation for deeper engagement, even as political differences persisted. Despite the growing economic ties, political differences continued to hinder the full potential of the relationship. Türkiye's unwavering support for Pakistan on the Kashmir issue still remained a major obstacle.

4.2.3. Phase III: Renewed Engagement and Ideological Transformation (1990s-2010s)

The conclusion of the Cold War marked a transformative era for both India and Türkiye, necessitating a reorientation of their foreign policies. For India, this entailed greater strategic autonomy, economic liberalisation, strategic partnerships with the West, and a focus on regional integration through the "Look East Policy." Türkiye, as its

strategic importance as a Cold War bulwark diminished, sought a new role in the evolving multipolar world order (Malone, 2011, p. 89). This period offered both nations opportunities for cooperation, while the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) in Türkiye in 2002 brought about ideological shifts that introduced new complexities to the relationship (Bajpai et al., 2014; Mehta, 2019).

The end of the Cold War liberated India from the constraints of the bipolar world, enabling it to pursue greater strategic autonomy and engage more actively with various global powers. Türkiye, on the other hand, found its strategic importance as a bulwark against the Soviet Union diminished, prompting a search for a new role in the evolving international order. Both countries sought to diversify their foreign relations and explore new partnerships, leading to increased engagement with each other (Mehta, 2019). India deepened its ties with major powers like the United States and the European Union, while also focusing on regional initiatives like the “Look East” policy. Meanwhile, Türkiye, under the AK Party’s leadership, embarked on a more assertive and multi-dimensional foreign policy, aiming to enhance its regional influence and global standing.

The AK Party’s ascent to power in 2002 brought about a significant ideological transformation in Turkish foreign policy (Mehta, 2019). The party’s emphasis on Islamic values and its ambition to elevate Türkiye’s status as a regional power led to a re-evaluation of its relations with various countries, including India. Ahmet Davutoğlu, the architect of the Türkiye’s “Strategic Depth”⁶⁰ doctrine and a prominent figure in the AK Party, envisioned a multi-layered foreign policy approach that leveraged historical, cultural, and economic ties to expand Türkiye’s influence (Sengupta, 2014, pp. 90-91; Mehta, 2019). Nonetheless, this proposal to redefine Türkiye’s national interests put forth by Davutoğlu, the then foreign policy advisor of Erdoğan, is actually not a sudden shift brought about by religious nationalist rhetoric. Instead, it reflects a shared perspective of Türkiye’s elite at the turn of the millennium, occasionally expressed by figures such as

⁶⁰ With a distinctively different connotation than its Turkish usage, the term “Strategic Depth” also refers to Pakistan’s assertive military approach towards Afghanistan aimed to maintain a friendly or even a client government in Afghanistan to serve as a buffer against India. Since Zia-ul-Haq’s coup d’état in 1977, this strategy is based on the idea that a hostile Afghanistan could pose a significant threat to Pakistan’s security (Ashwarya, 2017, p 92).

the Democratic Leftist former foreign minister İsmail Cem, a member of the Turkish secular high-bourgeoisie, or the former head of the National Intelligence Service, Emre Taner.

This reorientation led to a renewed focus on economic cooperation with India, particularly in sectors like defence, space, science, and technology. High-level visits and dialogues between the two countries intensified, reflecting a shared interest in expanding economic ties. Turkish companies sought opportunities in India's growing market, while Indian companies explored partnerships in Türkiye's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia (Mehta, 2019).

Despite the renewed engagement and focus on economic cooperation, the Kashmir dispute continued to cast a long shadow over India-Türkiye relations. The AK Party's emphasis on Islamic solidarity and its close ties with Pakistan led to a more vocal and assertive stance on Kashmir (Mehta, 2019). While Prime Minister Ecevit had initiated a temporary softening of Türkiye's position on Kashmir in the early 2000s, the AK Party government under President Erdoğan reverted to a more pro-Pakistan approach. This included frequent expressions of solidarity with the Kashmiri people and criticism of India's policies in the region, both domestically and in international forums (Pasha, 2006).

This divergence on the Kashmir issue not only strained bilateral relations but also hampered potential collaboration on regional security and stability. India viewed Türkiye's alignment with Pakistan with suspicion, while Türkiye's perceived lack of neutrality on the Kashmir issue hindered its potential role as a mediator.

4.2.4. Phase IV: Deepening Economic Ties and Lingering Political Challenges (2010s-Present)

The 2010s saw a new phase in India-Türkiye relations, characterised by a significant deepening of economic ties, yet accompanied by persistent political challenges. This period witnessed the rise of Narendra Modi and his Hindutva-infused approach to foreign policy, marking a departure from India's traditionally secular and non-aligned principles. While building upon the economic and strategic priorities of the post-Cold War period, Modi's government introduced a stronger emphasis on cultural

diplomacy, the mobilisation of the Indian diaspora, and a more assertive stance on national security (Blarel, 2014, p. 233), as explained in detail in 4.1.4. Modian Era above.

On the other hand, this period also witnessed a remarkable expansion in economic relations between India and Türkiye. Bilateral trade grew significantly, driven by a growing demand for each other's goods and services (Alam, 2024). High-level visits, including President Erdoğan's state visit to India in 2017, underscored the growing economic significance of the relationship. The visit focused on strengthening economic ties, with both countries exploring collaborations in infrastructure development, defence, and technology (Mehta, 2019).

Several factors contributed to this economic dynamism. India's emergence as a major global economy and its rapidly expanding market attracted Turkish businesses seeking new opportunities. Türkiye's strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, coupled with its growing manufacturing capabilities, made it an attractive destination for Indian investors. Moreover, both countries recognised the potential for mutual benefit through increased trade and investment. Institutional mechanisms like the India–Türkiye Joint Commission on Economic and Technical Cooperation (JCETC) and business-to-business platforms facilitated this economic engagement (Andrabi, 2014; MEA, 2023; Alam, 2024). However, despite these efforts, a comprehensive free trade agreement, hindered by political differences and protectionist tendencies in both countries; has left in a unsubstantiated situation.

While economic ties flourished, political differences continued to pose challenges to the relationship. The Kashmir dispute remained a major point of contention, with Türkiye's increasingly vocal support for Pakistan under the AK Party government further straining relations (Mehta, 2019). President Erdoğan's continuous remarks on Kashmir at the UN General Assembly and Türkiye's active participation in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir since 2019 were viewed by India as interference in its internal affairs.

At this stage, it can be clearly observed that Hindutva ideology has significantly influenced India's foreign policy towards Türkiye, particularly due to its inherent antagonism towards the historical Turkish presence in India. The BJP's ethnoreligious nationalist agenda, driven by the notion of reclaiming India's "authentic" Hindu identity,

views the Turkish influence as a historical imposition that disrupted this identity. This perspective has translated into a foreign policy approach that is particularly suspicious of Erdoğan's Türkiye, whose emphasise on the Ottoman Caliphate legacy is also closely associated with the Muslim communities of the Indian subcontinent particularly during the British colonialism. As a result, Hindutva driven India's interactions with Türkiye are coloured by a deep-seated historical resentment that informs a more cautious and sometimes hostile diplomatic stance.

It is a well-established fact that India's foreign policy towards Turkey is heavily shaped by how Türkiye positions itself on the Kashmir dispute and its relationship with Pakistan. Türkiye's support for Pakistan, particularly on the Kashmir dispute, is perceived as a direct challenge to India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This perception is exacerbated by the Hindutva-driven narrative, which frames such support not just as a political disagreement, but as an extension of historical Turkish-Muslim antagonism towards India. Consequently, India's policy towards Türkiye is shaped by a need to counterbalance any perceived alliance between Türkiye and Pakistan, leading to a more defensive and assertive diplomatic posture with Greece, Sothern Cyprus, Israel and Armenia. In other words, while any other country might support Pakistan or express concern for India's Muslim minority without provoking significant Indian retaliation, Türkiye's stance, even when mild, triggers an unusually assertive response from India. This reaction is evidently driven by Hindutva ideology, which views Türkiye's positions as a continuation of historical legacy. The BJP-led government, thus, adopts a foreign policy that seeks to counteract Türkiye's influence by projecting strength and assertiveness, even in cases where Türkiye's actions do not directly threaten India's interests.

India's growing relationship with Israel, driven by strategic and defence considerations, also clashed with Türkiye's pro-Palestinian stance (Beitelmair-Berini, 2021). This divergence in regional alignments further complicated the geopolitical landscape and hindered closer cooperation on issues related to the Middle East.

Erdoğan's vision for a reformed UNSC, emphasising broader representation of regional powers, also contrasted with India's focus on securing a permanent seat for itself (Alam, 2024) as the sixth major global power.

In conclusion, the evolution of India-Türkiye relations from 1947 to the present day are characterised by remnants of historical legacies, evolving geopolitical landscapes, and shifting domestic priorities. The relationship's trajectory, from initial post-colonial warmth to Cold War estrangement driven by diverging foreign policy orientations and the Kashmir conflict, a gradual rapprochement and renewed engagement in the post-Cold War era, and the current phase of deepening economic ties, albeit with lingering political challenges.

The subsequent chapter, analysing "India and Türkiye in a Strategic Embrace," will further explore these themes, examining how the redefinition of national interests and the identification of geostrategic convergences and divergences can shape the future trajectory of India-Türkiye relations in the 21st century. This chapter will investigate the potential for a more comprehensive and mutually beneficial partnership, contingent upon both nations' ability to navigate political differences, foster open dialogue and mutual respect, and capitalise on their shared economic interests. Such a partnership would require a commitment to overcoming existing obstacles, including differing stances on regional conflicts and the influence of domestic political considerations, and fostering a deeper understanding of each other's perspectives.

CHAPTER 5: INDIA AND TÜRKİYE IN A STRATEGIC EMBRACE IN 21ST CENTURY

In the preceding chapters of the thesis, the historical context of Hindutva's emergence and its evolution within Indian politics were explored. Additionally, the impact of Hindutva on India's foreign policy was analysed, tracing its evolution from the Nehruvian era to the present day under Prime Minister Modi. Furthermore, the various phases of the bilateral relationship between India and Türkiye were also examined. Throughout the thesis the theoretical and conceptual framework presented in the Chapter 1 was employed to contextualise the research problematique.

The main research question in this thesis is whether religious nationalism, namely Hindutva in contemporary India, has an impact on India's foreign policy towards Türkiye in post-2014 period. In this chapter, this research question will be tackled with under two sections. The first section will present a brief discussion on India and Türkiye's new strategic directions in post-2014 period. The second section will be analysing the geostrategic convergences and divergences between the two countries, by looking at how India acts in relation to Türkiye in three geostrategic regions: (1) Indian Ocean Region, (2) Eastern Mediterranean, and (3) Landlocked Eurasia. This analysis is expected to answer the main research question within the limits of this thesis.

5.1. INDIA AND TÜRKİYE'S NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS IN POST-2014 ERA

The 21st century has been a transformative era for both India and Türkiye, characterised by a significant reorientation of national interests and a departure from the traditional foreign policy paradigms that defined their Cold War postures. Particularly, under the leadership of Narendra Modi and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, both India and Türkiye have embarked on transformative foreign policy journeys, reflecting profound shifts in their geopolitical strategies. Despite being rooted in centuries of cultural exchange and trade, the relationship between India and Türkiye is continually evolving as both nations reassess their priorities in response to global changes. A critical examination of their contemporary foreign policies reveals a clear departure from Cold

War-era paradigms, a significant reorientation toward pragmatic national interests, and an evolving dynamic that presents both opportunities and challenges for bilateral cooperation. Before exploring the key geostrategic aspects of their modern foreign policies and their implications to shape the future of India-Türkiye relations, this section examines the evolution of India-Türkiye relations. Drawing on diverse perspectives, it will explore the factors that have led to both convergence and divergence, particularly within the frameworks of religious nationalism and area studies.

As explained in the Introduction in relation to the research question of this thesis, the resurgence of religious nationalism in both India and Türkiye has added a complexity to the relationship between the two countries (Malone, 2011, p. 182). Religious nationalism plays a significant role in both countries, albeit with different manifestations (Dutt and Girdner, 2000). In India, the rise of Hindutva ideology, as analysed by Juergensmeyer (1993) and others, has significantly influenced domestic politics and foreign policy. Mirroring the rise of religious nationalism in India, Turkey's political landscape under President Erdogan has witnessed a growing emphasis on Islamic conservatism, influencing its foreign policy in the region and beyond. While some scholars, like Schmidt and Chakrabarti (2021, p. 224), compare Modi to Erdogan as conservative nationalist leaders; others, like Berland (2017), highlight differences in their approach to moderation and democratic norms. In Türkiye, the rise of the Islamist-rooted ideology of Refah Party (RP) in the 1990s and later its outshoot AK Party in the 2000s, has also shaped its foreign policy, particularly its engagement with the Muslim world (Aslan, 2022; Dutt and Girdner, 2000, p. 19).

Despite the challenges and divergences, there are also opportunities for India and Türkiye to forge a multidimensional partnership based on shared interests and mutual respect (Malone, 2011, p. 197). Jassal and Turan (2018) observe that both countries have embraced globalisation and sought to integrate their economies into the global marketplace. This has led to increased trade and investment, with Türkiye expressing keen interest in India's "Make in India" initiative (Aras, 2017, p. 23) and convergence in the development project policies (Aras, 2017, p. 24). Economic cooperation, as highlighted by Mehta (2019), presents a promising avenue for collaboration, with both countries seeking to expand trade and investment ties. Areas such as defence, space, science, and technology also hold potential for cooperation, as noted by Aras (2017).

However, Beretta et al. (2023, p. 96) note that economic rivalry in certain sectors, such as textiles, could nonetheless pose a challenge. On the other hand, Tufekci (2017) notes a discourse within what is called “Turkish Eurasianism” advocating for closer ties with Eastern nations, including India, and even the establishment of a Eurasian Union as an alternative to Western alliances (pp. 71, 114, 119, 163). This indicates a potential ideological thrust within Türkiye that could further facilitate deeper cooperation with India.

However, in order to realise this potential, both countries need to address the existing challenges and build trust. Open dialogue and diplomatic engagement on contentious issues like Kashmir and the Cyprus conflict are essential. Türkiye’s historical ties with Pakistan and its support for Pakistan’s stance on the Kashmir issue have been points of contention (Kaura, 2020; Mehta, 2019). While Türkiye has sought to balance its relations with India and Pakistan, its continued support for Pakistan on Kashmir remains a sensitive issue. Additionally, Türkiye’s growing engagement in Turkestan, a region of strategic importance for India, has introduced a new dimension to their bilateral ties (Aras and Kandemir, 2023a, p. 176). As highlighted by Altınörs (2021) and Pasha (2006), increased cultural exchange and people-to-people contact can foster greater understanding and appreciation between the two nations, thereby facilitating closer cooperation.

As detailed in Chapter 4, the rise of the BJP under Narendra Modi has introduced new dynamics into India’s foreign policy reflecting both continuity and adaptation as the country confronts a shifting global order. “Act East and Beyond” policy, championed by Modi, marks a significant departure from the strict non-alignment that characterised India’s earlier foreign policy. By prioritising economic partnerships and strategic engagement in the Indo-Pacific, India aims to solidify its position as a regional power and counterbalance China’s growing influence. Rajagopalan (2017, p. 17) notes that this approach, while departing from Nehruvian non-alignment, still emphasises strategic autonomy within a framework of strategic partnerships. This shift is also evident in India’s fostering closer ties with countries like Armenia, Greece, Southern Cyprus as well as Israel and the United States, while simultaneously straining relations some Muslim-majority nations (Blarel, 2014; Mehta, 2019; Seren, 2022, p. 71).

Likewise, Erdoğan's assertive foreign policy in Türkiye represents a departure from traditional Kemalist principles, embracing a more proactive and multi-vector approach. As Yeşiltaş (2020) observes, Erdoğan's emphasis on strategic autonomy and engagement with diverse global actors reflects a desire to enhance Türkiye's regional and global influence. Similar to India's case, Türkiye is engaged in delicate diplomatic manoeuvres, carefully balancing its relationships with major global powers. This strategic equilibrium, between its ties with the United States, the European Union, Russia and China, is critical for Türkiye's ability to maintain their strategic autonomy and elevate its global standing.

Despite their differing ideological backgrounds, India and Türkiye's converging national interests has created a fertile ground for potential cooperation since both nations face common challenges, including energy security, maritime security, and sustainable economic growth. In this scope, the Indian Ocean Region, Eastern Mediterranean and Landlocked Eurasia open avenues for a cooperation that could significantly benefit the shared interests. The developing economies of India and Türkiye, combined with their respective strengths in technology and infrastructure, present promising opportunities for bilateral trade and investment. Enhancing economic ties through trade agreements and joint ventures can substantially boost bilateral relations.

The evolution of India-Türkiye relations is a testament to the dynamic nature of international politics in the 21st century. Despite the ideological differences shaping foreign policies, both countries have common ground on several fronts, driven by shared interests and a changing geopolitical landscape. As they continue to redefine their roles on the world stage, the potential for deeper cooperation remains promising. Nonetheless, the historical, cultural, and political factors that shape their interactions is yet to be thoroughly studied. By addressing challenges and seizing opportunities, a potential partnership of India and Türkiye contributes greatly to regional stability and global prosperity.

5.2. GEOSTRATEGIC CONVERGENCES AND DIVERGENCES BETWEEN INDIA AND TÜRKİYE IN 21ST CENTURY

Area studies, with its multidisciplinary approach, offers a comprehensive framework for analysing the intricate historical, political, economic, and social factors that shape the interests and potential for collaboration between India and Türkiye. In that context, the convergence-divergence framework employed in this thesis proved to be a useful tool. Convergence signifies areas where interests align, creating opportunities for collaboration and mutual benefit, such as shared security concerns or economic interests. Conversely, divergence highlights potential areas of competition or differing approaches, necessitating careful navigation. These areas might involve contrasting political ideologies, historical grievances, or competing alliances.

The convergence-divergence framework of area studies proves invaluable in analysing India-Türkiye relations within specific geographic regions. Jassal and Turan (2018) highlight the similarities and differences in their foreign policies, emphasising the importance of examining how domestic politics and international dynamics shape their international positioning. Geopolitical considerations continue to shape the India-Türkiye relationship.

In answering the main research question of the thesis, i.e. the impact of Hindutva on India's foreign policy towards Türkiye, within the convergence-divergence framework, this section is to analyse three key regions where both India and Türkiye has important economic and geopolitical interests: (1) Indian Ocean Region (IOR); (2) Eastern Mediterranean Sea, and (3) Landlocked Eurasia.

By scrutinising both convergences and divergences within these regions, we can gain a nuanced understanding of the potential for a multidimensional India-Türkiye partnership and the challenges that need to be addressed. This comprehensive analysis will not only illuminate the complexities of their evolving relationship but also identify potential pathways for future cooperation, contributing to a more stable and prosperous future for both nations and the broader regions they engage in.

However, it is also imperative to acknowledge the broader geopolitical context. The relationship between India and Türkiye is not solely defined by their engagement in

specific regions. Historical ties, ideological differences, and relationships with other global powers such as China, Russia, and the United States, also shape their bilateral cooperation. Factors like economic ties, military cooperation, cultural exchange, and people-to-people contact play significant roles.

In the following subsections, these broader considerations will be analysed in order to examine the potential for India and Türkiye in collaboration on regional issues and to explore the challenges that may impede closer cooperation. By considering the broader geopolitical landscape, a relatively holistic understanding of the factors that influence the India-Türkiye relationship could be gained and potential pathways for future collaboration could potentially be identified.

5.2.1. Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

As a critical maritime domain for global trade and energy security, the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) presents fertile ground for investing the strategic convergence and divergences between India and Türkiye. Both countries share a vested interest in securing access to energy resources and fostering regional stability within this area. Additionally, both countries have sought to expand their naval presence and influence in the IOR, creating potential areas for securing the maritime routes and resources particularly at the certain chokepoints which of vital importance not just at the regional level but for the world's economic stability, as seen in Figure 7.

Key areas relevant to the analysis include (1) East Africa, a region rich in natural resources and strategic importance; (2) South East Asia, a rapidly developing economic powerhouse; (3) Red Sea, a vital trade route connecting Europe, Africa, and Asia; (4) Persian Gulf, a major oil-producing region. Most importantly, the rivalry between proposed trade routes, such as India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), which notably excludes Türkiye, and Türkiye-Iraq Development Road, which includes India, clearly showcases the divergence of interests between India and Türkiye. Both routes aim to enhance intercontinental connectivity and economic cooperation between IOR and Europe, but their competition highlights the distinct strategic visions of these two nations.

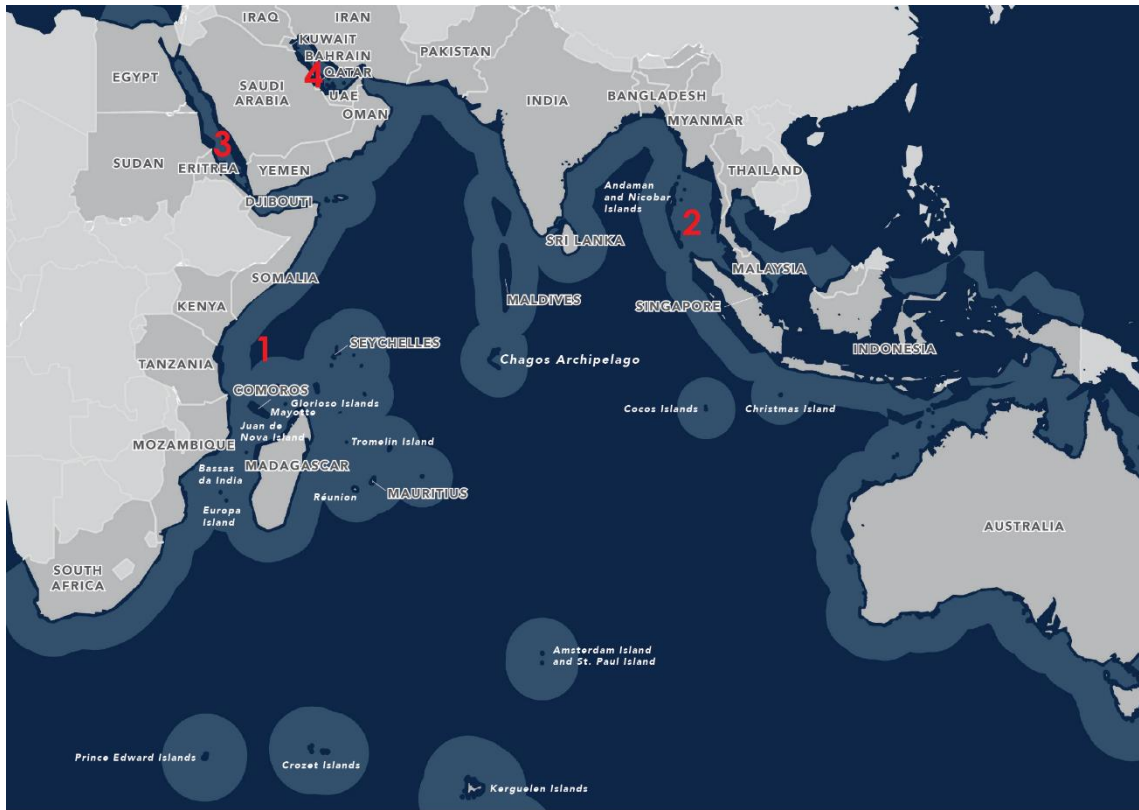


Figure 7. A Map the Indian Ocean Displaying the Countries with a Coastline⁶¹

Firstly, East Africa, with its growing economies and strategic location along vital shipping lanes, presents a compelling case for India-Türkiye collaboration. Historical trade routes, once bustling with spices and textiles, offer a foundation for trust and cooperation in the 21st century. Türkiye's establishment of a naval base in Mogadishu, Somalia, is a strategic move aimed at addressing the challenges of terrorism and piracy in the region. This base serves as a key foothold for Türkiye to secure vital chokepoints of world trade, including the Bab al Mandap Strait, Mozambique Channel, and Strait of Hormuz. Both Türkiye and India face common challenges like piracy and maritime insecurity, creating an opportunity for joint initiatives to strengthen regional maritime security architecture. India's strong navy, strategically positioned for Indian Ocean patrols, can complement Türkiye's growing naval presence, fostering a more secure environment for international trade across IOR. Türkiye could also utilise India's vast pool of skilled labour for infrastructure projects in East Africa. Additionally, both India

⁶¹ From "Mapping the Indian Ocean Region" by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Baruah et al., 2023). Numbers are included by the author of the thesis.

and Türkiye seek to counter China's growing economic and strategic influence in East Africa. Collaboration in infrastructure projects and resource development can offer an alternative to China's dominance, fostering regional economic diversification and ensuring a level playing field for all stakeholders. It is also worth noting that since the early days of the first BJP government, India has sought to fill the void left by the Soviet Union's collapse and become the dominant nuclear power in IOR stretching from Africa to South Asia since these regions were lacking comprehensive nuclear security arrangements following the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (Talbot, 2004, p. 81).

Secondly, India's "Act East" policy, focused on expanding economic and strategic partnerships in East Asia (Alam, 2024, p. 96), finds resonance with Türkiye's "Asia Anew Initiative" prioritising enhanced trade and economic cooperation in the region. This convergence creates space for co-investment in infrastructure development (ports, transportation networks) and resource exploration to meet their growing energy demands. India, a major consumer of resources like oil and minerals, can benefit from Türkiye's expertise in construction and engineering.

Thirdly, the Red Sea, a critical chokepoint connecting the Indian Ocean with the Mediterranean Sea, presents another potential avenue for India-Türkiye partnership. Serving as a crucial maritime corridor connecting continents and facilitating trade, energy flow, and security interests. The Red Sea's geostrategic importance is undeniable for both Türkiye and India. For Türkiye, the Red Sea represents a gateway to East Africa and Asia, enabling Ankara to expand its economic and political influence in these regions (Balamir-Coşkun et al., 2012, p. 60; Donelli, 2021, pp. 64, 89, 108-109). Moreover, the Red Sea's proximity to the Suez Canal enhances Türkiye's strategic reach, allowing for efficient trade routes to Europe and bolstering its role as a transit hub. For India, the Red Sea has always been a vital link to Europe and the Middle East, facilitating the transport of oil and gas resources essential for its energy security (Malone et al., 2015, pp. 97, 102, 623). Both nations recognise the importance of maintaining stability and security in the Red Sea, as disruptions to maritime traffic or the rise of piracy could have severe economic and security repercussions.

Fourthly, the Persian Gulf, a hydrocarbon-rich region, presents a more nuanced scenario for India and Türkiye. India, a major energy importer, seeks to secure reliable

crude oil supplies from the region (Malone et al., 2015, p. 193). Türkiye aims to expand trade and investment opportunities with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states and potentially assume a mediating role in regional conflicts (Balamir-Coşkun et al., 2012, pp. 43-87) . While a degree of competition exists in the energy sector, joint ventures in energy infrastructure projects offer potential to streamline energy transportation and develop alternative energy sources. India's expertise in renewable energy can be combined with Türkiye's experience in hydrocarbon infrastructure to create a more sustainable energy future for the region. Furthermore, both India and Türkiye share a common interest in regional security and stability. Collaborating in regional security initiatives and cooperating with GCC states can help counter extremism and maritime piracy, fostering a more secure Persian Gulf environment.

As an important outlet in showcasing the geopolitical picture in the IOR, IMEC which was proposed in the G20 summit in New Delhi in 2023 highlights a notable divergence in India and Türkiye's strategic interests (Alam, 2024). Despite Türkiye's well-established position as a logistical hub with extensive infrastructure in ports, airlines, and railways, its exclusion from the IMEC project raises concerns regarding potential obstacles to cooperation. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has emphasised that a corridor bypassing Türkiye would be inefficient and logistically challenging. Türkiye has proposed its own "Development Road Project" as an alternative (Figure 8), connecting Türkiye to the Persian Gulf through Iraq (Korkmaz, 2023).

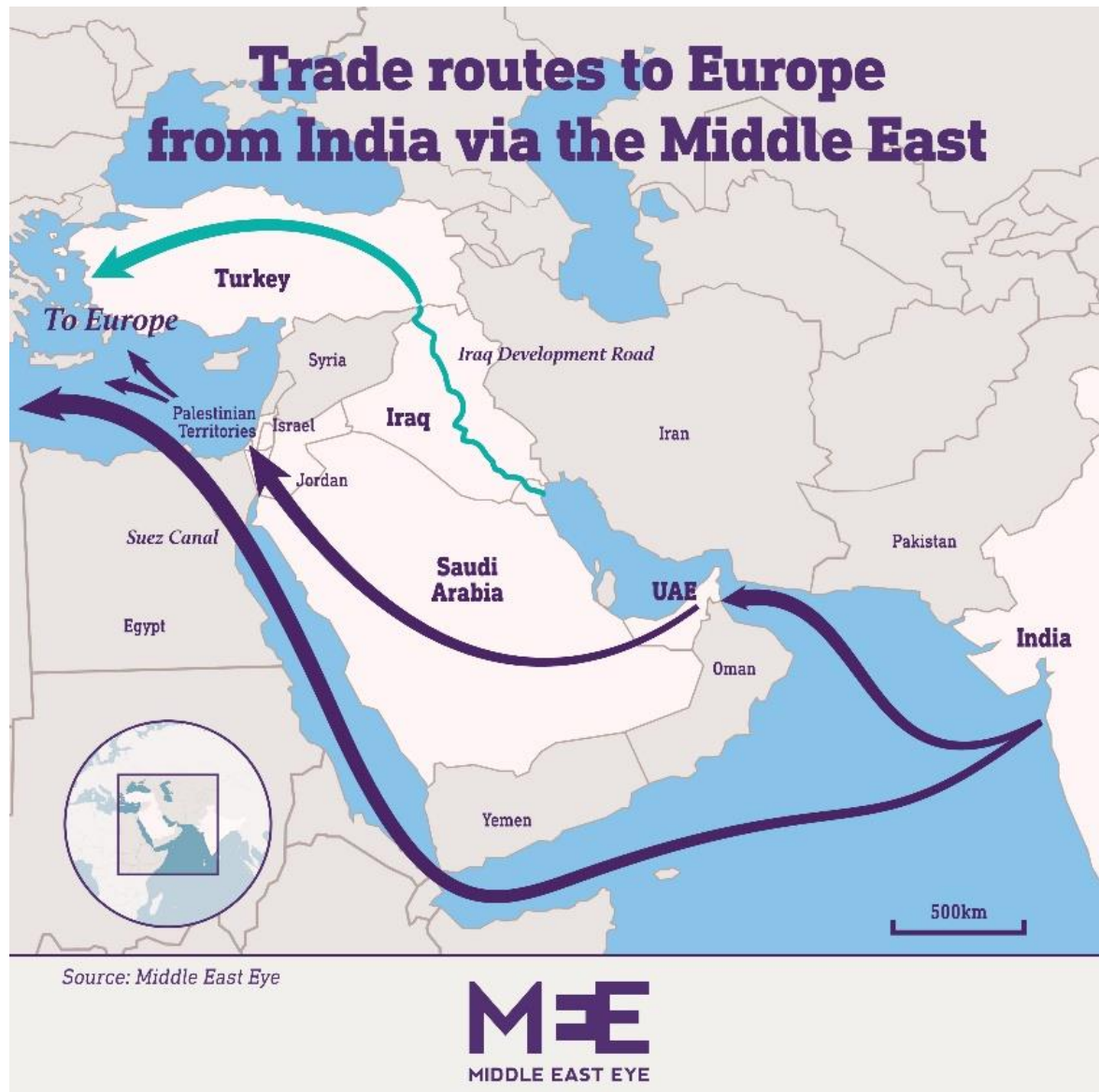


Figure 8. A Map of IMEC and Development Road⁶²

The proposed IMEC route begins in India, originating from a major port city on the western coast such as Mumbai. From India, the corridor would traverse the dunes of Arabian deserts, passing through countries like the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and reaching Eastern Mediterranean Sea in Haifa port in Israel. Finally, the route would terminate in Europe, with potential endpoints including Southern Cyprus, Greece, and Italy. As a multimodal corridor, including rail, road, and maritime routes, to facilitate trade, investment, and economic cooperation between the participating countries, IMEC

⁶² From “The India-Middle East Corridor: A New Silk Route or Diplomacy by PowerPoint?” by Middle East Eye (2023).

has garnered support from various key stakeholders, each with their own strategic objectives such as India, the United States, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the European Union, France, Germany, and Italy (The White House, 2023; Prakash, 2024, p. 39). The US views the IMEC as a means to counter China's BRI, strengthen ties with India, and promote regional stability. The EU is interested in diversifying trade routes, countering China's influence, and enhancing energy security. Israel sees the IMEC as an opportunity to strengthen ties with India and improve regional connectivity. Arab states, particularly Saudi Arabia and the UAE, are likely to support the IMEC as a means to diversify their economies, strengthen ties with the US, and enhance regional connectivity. While the IMEC offers significant potential benefits for all stakeholders, challenges such as financing, infrastructure development, and geopolitical complexities will need to be cautiously addressed to ensure its successful implementation (Korkmaz, 2023).

In an interview, Turkish Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Uraloğlu expressed a cautious and somewhat critical stance on the IMEC. Referring to Türkiye's own "Development Road Project" as a more viable alternative, he has highlighted the Iraqi route's advantages in terms of efficiency and commercial viability due to fewer mode changes. He has also expressed concerns about the security challenges that IMEC might face, especially in light of the ongoing conflict in the region where the corridor meets the sea (Tavsan, 2023). While incorporating Türkiye could significantly enhance the corridor's efficiency, reducing transportation costs and establishing faster trade routes for all involved, India's decision to pursue an alternate route through the Arabian Peninsula suggests a strategic misalignment. This omission of Türkiye, a key regional player with significant logistical capabilities, could potentially hinder the collaborative environment necessary for the IMEC's success.

Nonetheless, this situation presents a potential advantage for the alternative Türkiye-Iraq Development Road Project, which could offer a more stable route in the near term. While the Türkiye-Iraq Development Road Project holds promise, fostering regional cooperation through a combined approach that leverages the strengths of both projects could be a more sustainable long-term strategy. As Diriöz (2024) highlights, the Development Road initiative aims to reach out to Mumbai, India. Despite exclusion from IMEC, Türkiye seeks to maintain and strengthen economic ties with India since India's democratic values and growing economy as well as well-being of its significant Muslim

population are important factors for Türkiye. Both countries share an interest in regional stability and trade. Development Road offers the West a greater access to the Gulf region and Southeast Asia, while establishing a direct connection with India through the Strait of Hormuz as a stable alternative to Suez Canal (Diriöz, 2024).

Announced during the G20 summit in New Delhi, where Türkiye was also a participant, the IMEC has been interpreted by some as an unfeasible response to Türkiye's Development Road initiative, which aims to strengthen its position as a key transit hub between Asia and Europe. The proposed IMEC route, which traverses the challenging terrains and conflict-prone zones, bypassing Türkiye despite the country's natural geographical advantage and extensive infrastructure investments is a deliberate move that raises questions about the underlying incentives behind this decision. While the project could be seen as an ambitious but improbable venture (Middle East Eye, 2023), India's choice might also reflect broader ideological motivations, including the influence of Hindutva ideology in the government.

The exclusion of Türkiye from IMEC, coupled with the inclusion of nations like Israel, Greece and Southern Cyprus in this assertive geostrategic movement of India, suggests a clear divergence with Türkiye and, at the same time, a convergence with partners that share or accommodate India's broader geopolitical and ideological objectives, even at the cost of sidelining a more pragmatic and secure route through Türkiye.

One possible explanation for Türkiye's exclusion is that Israel and Southern Cyprus may be playing a role in shaping India's geopolitical alliances since both countries with their influential diaspora in Western countries might be keen to align with India against Türkiye considering India's status as a prominent regional nuclear power. This could involve lobbying or exerting influence to ensure their inclusion and Türkiye's exclusion. However, another possibility is that BJP government's assertive and proactive foreign policy is prioritising its partners who align more closely with its ideological stance.

The critical question here is whether Türkiye's exclusion is solely a result of geopolitical factors or BJP government's ideological preferences are also at play. This raises the possibility that Türkiye's alignment with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue could

serve as a convenient pretext for BJP politics to eliminate Türkiye. If Türkiye were to change its tone on the Kashmir issue, it would be interesting to observe how India's foreign policy towards Türkiye might evolve. This could potentially lead to a reassessment of Türkiye's role in India's geopolitical strategy and a reconsideration of the benefits of including Türkiye in future initiatives.

Despite Türkiye's exclusion from the IMEC, its growing involvement in the IOR remains significant. Both Türkiye and India have expressed interest in maritime security, energy cooperation, and counter-terrorism efforts in the IOR. Notably, Donelli (2021) highlights Türkiye's substantial investment in Africa, showcasing its ambition as an emerging extra-regional actor (p. 4). Although understudied compared to the involvement of other emerging powers like China and India (Donelli, 2021, pp. 11-12), Türkiye's activities in the IOR, encompassing both East Africa and South Asia, signal a growing interest in expanding its influence in these regions.

However, Türkiye's historical focus on Pakistan grounded in the notion of Muslim solidarity, and its reliance on Western support for its involvement in the South Asian region have often overshadowed its other regional engagements (Aslan, 2022). This Pakistan-centric approach which aligns with the prejudices inherent in Hindutva ideology, has influenced BJP-led India's position on Türkiye. Notwithstanding the attempts to balance its South Asia policy, Türkiye's strong ties with Pakistan, particularly on the Kashmir issue, remain central to its regional approach, creating a divergence with India (Kaura, 2020). Furthermore, while India is wary of China's growing influence in the region through the Belt and Road Initiative (Sen, 2019), Türkiye has shown a willingness to collaborate with China on various projects, further complicating their relationship in the IOR.

Despite the potential for collaboration, India and Türkiye face certain challenges. Balancing strategic priorities – India's focus on the Indo-Pacific and Türkiye's emphasis on the Eastern Mediterranean – is crucial. Finding common ground on issues where their interests diverge, such as their relationships with regional powers like Iran and Saudi Arabia, requires careful diplomatic manoeuvring. Competition in the energy sector can be mitigated through joint ventures that utilise their respective strengths. Navigating the volatile security situation in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea also requires a nuanced

approach, balancing cooperation with regional actors and safeguarding their own national security interests. However, the potential benefits of collaboration are significant. By leveraging their historical ties, shared interests, and growing strategic presence in the Indian Ocean region, a potential rapprochement between India and Türkiye could promote regional stability, economic prosperity, and maritime security. This partnership can serve as a model for fostering cooperation in the broader Indian Ocean region, ensuring a secure and prosperous future for all stakeholders.

5.2.2. Eastern Mediterranean Sea

As a strategic waterway characterised by complex geopolitical dynamics, the Eastern Mediterranean Sea presents a potential arena for collaboration between India and Türkiye. One of the most critical geostrategic junctions for global trade and energy resources, the Suez Canal connecting the Indian Ocean to the European markets as a vital link between these two regions historically have been a focal point for both nations. Both nations have a shared interest in ensuring the unimpeded flow of trade through this crucial waterway, thereby underscoring the importance of regional stability and cooperation in the wider Middle East. This could translate into joint efforts to address issues such as maritime security, energy exploration, and conflict resolution.

Traditionally, India has maintained a neutral stance on Eastern Mediterranean disputes. However, recent developments appear to be prompting a recalibration of its strategic posture. This shift could be attributed to several key factors, some of which hold potential for deeper understanding.

India's growing alignment with Greece and Southern Cyprus, the vocal opponents of Türkiye's "Blue Homeland" maritime initiative as depicted in Figure 9 below, as well as Israel can be interpreted as a strategic hedge against a rising China. This alignment offers India a potential foothold in the Eastern Mediterranean and access to new energy sources. However, this approach risks becoming entangled in pre-existing regional rivalries, potentially hindering India's ability to play a constructive role as a neutral arbiter.

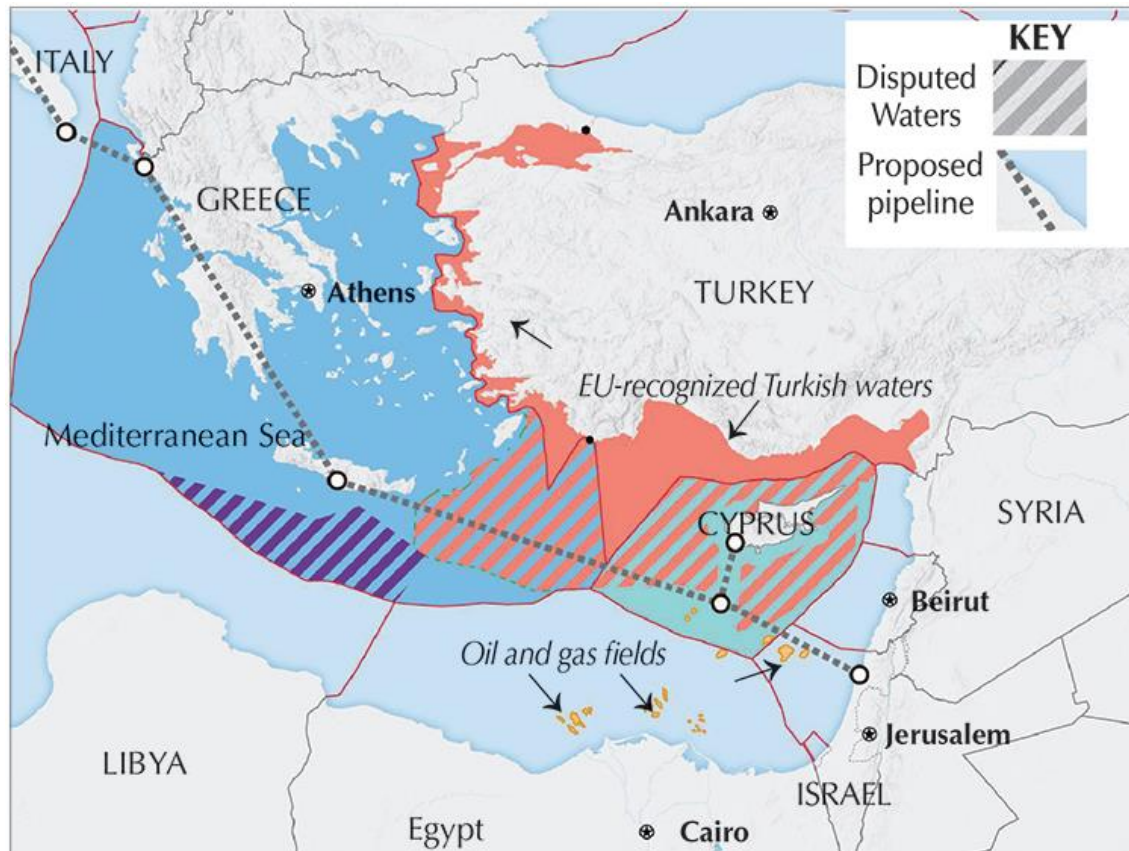


Figure 9. A Map of the Disputed Maritime Territories in Eastern Mediterranean⁶³

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing India's foreign policy towards Türkiye, it is essential to conduct a comparative analysis of its relationships with Southern Cyprus, Greece, Israel and Armenia in contrast to Türkiye's partnership Pakistan as well as its stances on Kashmir and Palestine. India's enduring support for Southern Cyprus claiming to rely on the UN-backed solution undermines Türkiye's concerns and historical ties to the island (Altınörs, 2021, p. 1212). This stance, coupled with India's recently growing ties to Greece, could potentially complicate regional cooperation efforts. It is also important to note, that India's traditional support for the "independence, sovereignty and integrity of Cyprus but not the idea of Enosis" (Aslan, 2022, p. 134) dates back to NAM days (Bishku, 2016, p. 88). However, under the pressure of rising Hindutva movement, India's emerging foreign policy has adopted a

⁶³ The map highlights areas of disagreement between Türkiye, Greece and Southern Cyprus, as well as the EastMed pipeline proposed by Israel, which could serve as a stepping stone or complementary project to the IMEC. From "Turkish, Greek rulers' rivalry heats up in the Mediterranean" by Terry Evans (2020).

more assertive stance, utilising Southern Cyprus' claims for the entire island and Armenian issue as a leverage in response to Türkiye's traditional rhetoric on the Kashmir issue, even a year prior to Modi's ascent to power (Kaura, 2020, p. 4). When President Erdogan highlighted the unresolved Kashmir dispute as a critical issue for South Asian stability and urged its resolution through dialogue based on justice and fairness during the 74th UN General Assembly on 24 September 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi subsequently held meetings with Southern Cyprus President Nicos Anastasiades and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan on the sidelines of the assembly which prompted a massive applause by the Greek, Southern Cypriot, Armenian and Hindutva affiliated media. In his article titled "Why India's ties with Turkey are worse than ever before", Deuskar (2023) reports that Modi has responded to Türkiye's stance on the Kashmir issue by strengthening its ties with countries that have hectic relations with Türkiye, such as Israel, Greece, Southern Cyprus, and Armenia. This outreach as a counter to Türkiye's approach, indicate a potential of a concerted effort to form a strategic alliance against Türkiye. India's engagement with these countries is driven by a combination of strategic interests, economic considerations, and a desire to counter Türkiye's influence (Deuskar, 2023).

The ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict undeniably casts a shadow over the entire Eastern Mediterranean region, causing immense human suffering and hindering long-term stability. While the specific details of the conflict are beyond the scope of this analysis, it is important to acknowledge the humanitarian crisis and the disruption it creates for any large-scale regional infrastructure project. This instability also affects the planned route of the IMEC which connects Indian Ocean to Eastern Mediterranean, with Haifa Port in Israel being a designated endpoint which could pose challenges for the IMEC's immediate viability.

The Eastern Mediterranean presents another arena for potential convergence and divergence. While both countries have expressed concerns about regional stability their stances on the Cyprus issue and relations with Israel differ. India's historical support for the Palestinian cause (Akhtar, 1969; Appadorai, 1981, pp. 56, 148-149; Mansingh, 1984, pp. 80-81; Malone et al., 2015, pp. 543, 662, 673), and its growing ties with Israel (Blarel, 2014) create a complex dynamic in its relationship with Türkiye. Since the initial days of the withdrawal of the Turkish forces from the region and the start of the British imperialist

mandate in this Eastern Mediterranean land, INC resisted to recognise the partition of Palestine for a Jewish homeland, in line with its earlier policy of supporting anti-colonial movements across the world. As Blarel notes, Türkiye's earlier recognition of Israel in 1949 was used as a leverage by Israeli diplomacy to persuade Nehru to also recognise (Blarel, 2014, p. 105) and weakened the INC's traditional argument that its domestic Muslim population would oppose the recognition (Blarel, 2014, p. 107). When India finally recognised the State of Israel, Nehru administration felt compelled to issue an explicit statement reaffirming its friendly stance with Arab nations and expressing its commitment to "full justice and humane treatment of Arab refugees" in Palestine (Blarel, 2014, p. 109). Although Türkiye's relations with Israel dramatically fluctuated since the recognition due to the ongoing military aggressions of Israel, and Türkiye's indispensable ties with Western powers, India's position remained relatively stable until BJP's realignment.

While Türkiye's "Blue Homeland" initiative has raised concerns in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly in relation to its recent seismic research activities in disputed waters and its assertion of claims over maritime areas, Turkish analysts emphasise that these actions are rooted in international law. They argue that Türkiye's activities in the region are aimed at securing its energy independence and economic prosperity, and that any disputes regarding maritime boundaries and resource exploration rights should be resolved through dialogue and negotiation rather than unilateral actions. This perspective contrasts with India's growing strategic presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, driven by its energy needs and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) project, which seeks to establish a new trade route that bypasses Türkiye, potentially impacting its interests in the region (Alam, 2024, pp. 106-107).

India and Türkiye, share a common interest in regional stability, economic cooperation, and maritime security in the Eastern Mediterranean region. Both countries have sought to expand their economic footprints in the region, with a focus on trade, investment, and energy cooperation. However, significant divergences between India and Türkiye continue, particularly related to the Cyprus issue and maritime claims. Reactive recalibration of India's national interests in the Eastern Mediterranean which resulted in India's increased alignment with Türkiye's adversaries in the region in response to its

stance on the Kashmir conflict can be attributed to the influence of Hindutva ideology's assertiveness in foreign policy.

Furthermore, the depiction of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a civilisational struggle between Muslims and Jews has far-reaching implications, extending beyond the immediate region to influence global perceptions and political alignments. This framing not only intensifies existing tensions but also serves as a catalyst for the rise of various forms of religious nationalism around the world. The conflict, analysed within the framework of religious nationalism's impact on global politics, contributes to the idea that international alliances are increasingly shaped by extreme ideological stances that are promoted for political power within countries. In this context, the evolving partnership between Israel and India could be interpreted not just as a strategic or economic collaboration, but as an ideological alignment between Zionism and Hindutva against Islam, which is perceived as their common adversary. Consequently, BJP government's alliance with Israel is strengthened by this shared ideological stance, which not only strengthens bilateral ties but also reinforces the global perception of a unified front against a perceived Islamic threat. This alignment further solidifies the role of religious nationalism in international relations, making it a significant factor in the geopolitical dynamics of the region and beyond.

5.2.3. Landlocked Eurasia

Eurasia, the world's largest landmass, encompasses a vast array of geographical features, including landlocked regions that play a critical role in global geopolitics and energy security. These regions have been referred as the "pivot area" and considered "the key to world domination" (Mackinder, 1904) as seen in Figure 10 below. Landlocked Eurasia can be divided into two sub-regions of strategic significance: (1) Southern Caucasus, and (2) Turkestan. With its abundant energy resources and strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, Southern Caucasus offers prospects for cooperation in energy transportation, trade, and regional stability initiatives. Both India and Türkiye are increasingly interested in the Southern Caucasus, particularly as a potential transit corridor for Caspian Sea energy resources. This shared interest could lead to joint investments in infrastructure and energy projects, as well as collaboration on security and conflict resolution efforts. Encompassing Central Asian countries like Turkmenistan and

Kazakhstan, Turkestan boasts vast oil and gas reserves. Both India and Türkiye seek to diversify their energy sources and establish trade partnerships in this area. Furthermore, ensuring access to IOR and Eastern Mediterranean ports through infrastructure projects is crucial for these landlocked countries to bring their resources to the global market, potentially mitigating their reliance on Russia. Cooperation on infrastructure development and trade facilitation could be mutually beneficial.

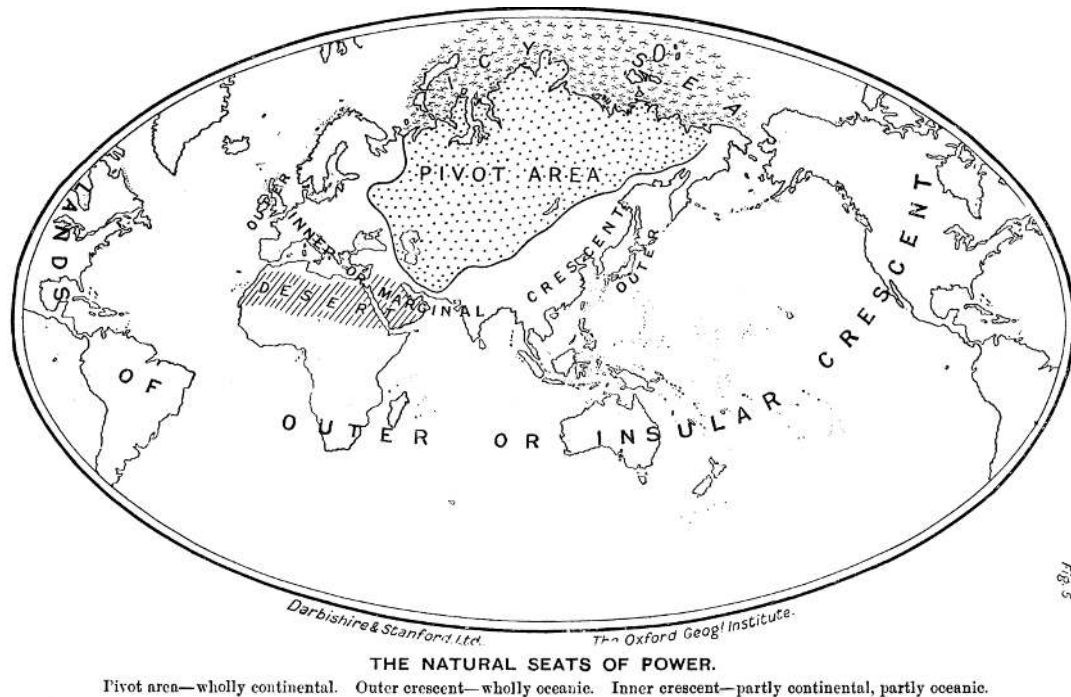


Figure 10. Landlocked Eurasia or “The Pivot Area”⁶⁴

The Southern Caucasus, with its rich energy resources and strategic location, has become a focal point of interest for both India and Türkiye. This region, nestled between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, comprises Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. Its vast reserves of oil and natural gas, particularly within the Caspian Sea basin, combined with its position as a crucial transit corridor for energy pipelines and trade routes connecting Europe and Asia, make it a region of immense strategic value.

The Caspian Sea basin, a linchpin in Eurasian trade, has witnessed the emergence of several key initiatives aimed at diversifying and enhancing trade flows across the

⁶⁴ From “The Geographical Pivot of History” by Mackinder who introduced the concept of the “pivot area” (Mackinder, 1904).

region. Notably, the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Trans-Caspian East-West-Middle Corridor Initiative (Middle Corridor) are competing for prominence, each offering unique advantages and challenges.

The INSTC, a multimodal transportation network encompassing ship, rail, and road routes, seeks to connect India with Russia and Europe through Iran, as depicted in Figure 11 below. This ambitious project holds the promise of reducing transportation costs and transit times for a wide range of goods, making it a compelling alternative to traditional routes like the Suez Canal. India sees the INSTC as a crucial opportunity to diversify its trade routes and decrease reliance on traditional pathways. However, the corridor's vulnerability to sanctions imposed on Iran and the ongoing conflicts in the South Caucasus present significant challenges. BJP governments ongoing military support to Armenia (Melikyan, 2024) has aggravated the unresolved status quo in the South Caucasus.

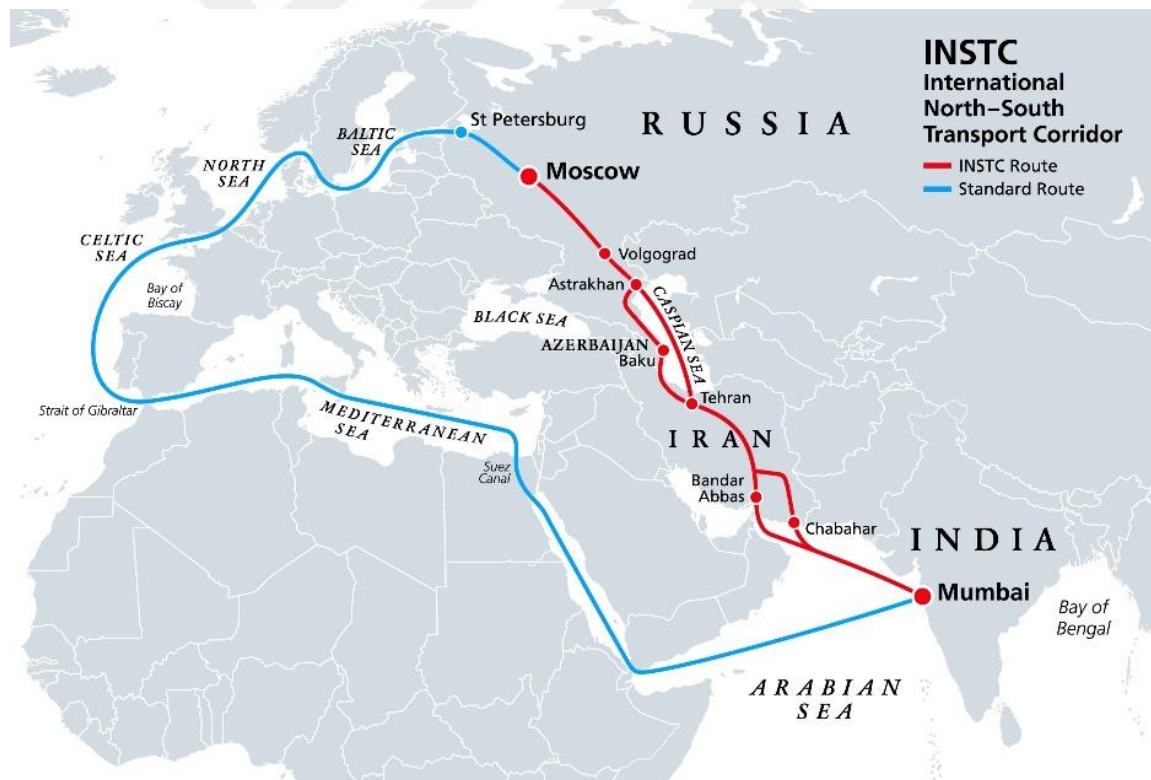


Figure 11. A Map of INSTC Connecting India and Europe⁶⁵

⁶⁵ From “International North-South Transit Corridor (INSTC)” by AVİM (2023)

Türkiye, a key player in the region, has its own ambitious project, the Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) or colloquially referred as the Middle Corridor as seen in Figure 12 below. While both initiatives aim to enhance Eurasian trade connectivity, they also represent competing visions for regional integration. Türkiye's Middle Corridor leverages existing infrastructure across Türkiye, the Caucasus nations, and Central Asia, bypassing Iran, a key transit nation in the INSTC.

The Middle Corridor, is a multimodal transportation route bridging the Caspian Sea through the South Caucasus offering an alternative passage for cargo movement between China and Europe. Its strategic positioning and potential for shorter transit times makes it an attractive option for many stakeholders. Türkiye, with its recent investments in infrastructure, aims to use this corridor to bolster its position as a regional transit hub. The Middle Corridor, with its reliance on Zengezur Corridor as a short-cut and an alternative the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars (BTK) railway, is a testament to Türkiye's commitment to fostering regional connectivity and promoting trade between Asia and Europe. However, its potential competition with the INSTC highlights the complexity of geostrategic interests in the region.



Figure 12. A Map of the Middle Corridor⁶⁶

⁶⁶ From “Trans-Caspian International Transport Route (TITR) aka the Middle Corridor” by the Astana Times (2024).

While both India and Türkiye share a common interest in enhancing Eurasian trade connectivity, their strategic priorities and approaches differ. India's primary focus is on securing energy supplies and diversifying trade routes, while Türkiye seeks to leverage its geographic position and infrastructure investments to become a dominant transit hub. The Observer Research Foundation (ORF), a prominent Indian think tank, has analysed these dynamics, acknowledging the potential competition between the INSTC and the Middle Corridor, as well as the geopolitical tensions involving Azerbaijan and Armenia. These factors pose significant challenges to aligning the strategic interests of both countries. However, the ORF also recognises the potential for cooperation, particularly in countering China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) influence and enhancing regional connectivity.

A detailed ORF report on Indo-Pacific connectivity (Prakash, 2024) completely omits Türkiye's significant transportation and infrastructure projects despite their relevance which can be observed in Figure 13 below. This suggests a potential bias and questions the comprehensiveness of the report. The omission of Türkiye in such a relevant field by the ORF report is noteworthy, particularly given the think tank's reputation for reason-based analysis and practical solutions. Established and funded by "the richest man in Asia" to primarily serve as a networking hub for India's elite, the ORF's research output arguably takes a backseat to its role as a platform for fostering relationships between industrialists, politicians, and bureaucrats (Sajjanhar, 2021, p. 13). This omission, therefore, raises questions about the report's comprehensiveness and potential biases, especially considering the ORF's close alignment with the Indian government's foreign policy priorities.

Considering the initial establishment of the INSTC during India's first BJP-led government and its ongoing reluctance to meaningfully include Türkiye suggest that an underlying political agenda may be deliberately hindering engagement with Türkiye. With this regard it is noteworthy that an ORF analysis, discussing the potential divergences and convergences between India's INSTC and Türkiye's Middle Corridor, admits that competition between these corridors, along with geopolitical tensions involving Azerbaijan and Armenia, presents significant challenges in the alignment of the strategic interests of both countries (Chourasia, 2023). This image of competition, instead of cooperation, implies a intentional attempt to circumvent Türkiye in spite of its

geopolitical importance. This raises the question: Could BJP governments' Hindutva-driven strategy be a contributing factor? On the other hand, it is arguable that both countries share a mutual interest in countering China's BRI influence and enhancing regional connectivity, suggesting potential areas for cooperation despite competing priorities.

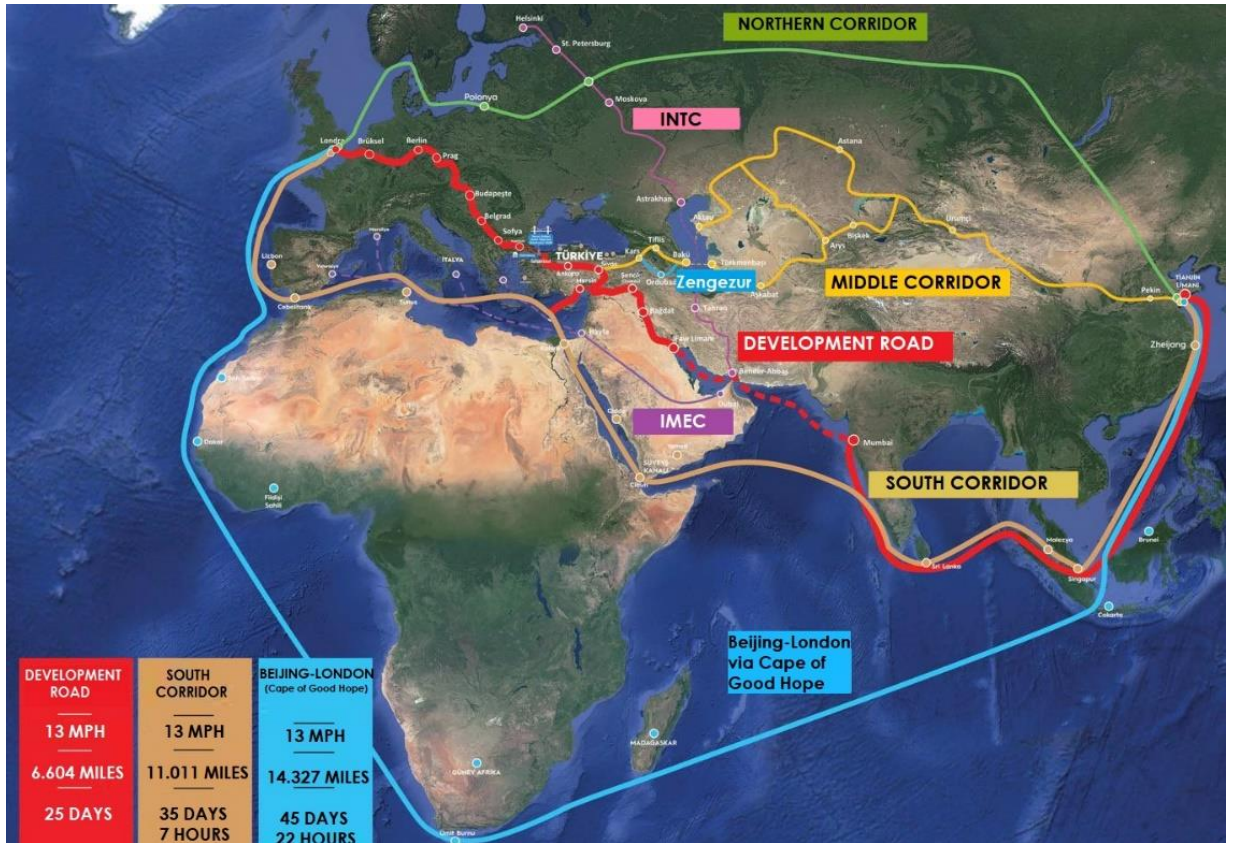


Figure 13. Türkiye and the Afroeurasian Connectivity⁶⁷

Another ORF analysis by an Armenian scholar Yepremyan (2024), addresses the geopolitical implications of the India-Armenia partnership for Türkiye. Yepremyan highlights the potential hindrance to Türkiye's Zengezur Corridor and competition with Türkiye's Middle Corridor and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Unless the regional stability is enhanced through improved connectivity as suggested by the Zengezur initiative and opportunities for new trade routes between Türkiye and India would be negotiable, the India-Armenia alignment on the INSTC could undeniably challenge

⁶⁷ From "'Kalkınma Yolu için Kritik Görüşme"' by TR Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (2024). The captions are translated to English by the author of the thesis.

Türkiye's strategic interests. This alignment is, again, a strategic extension of the BJP government's broader foreign policy agenda, which seeks to forge alliances with nations that share a complex or adversarial relationship with Türkiye. This approach is not merely coincidental but rather a calculated effort to reshape regional dynamics in a way that aligns with the BJP's ideological and geopolitical objectives. By cultivating strong ties with countries like Armenia, which have their own historical and ongoing tensions with Türkiye, the BJP-led government in India is reinforcing a network of alliances that collectively counterbalance Türkiye's influence in the region.

Nonetheless, there is a potential for a convergence of interests between India and Türkiye. A peaceful resolution in the region, facilitated by the Zangezur Corridor, could benefit both countries by establishing a lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Jaishankar, 2021; Trivedi, 2021). Furthermore, the stability and security of Chabahar port, the proposed INSTC landing area situated in the internally vulnerable Sunni-majority Baluchistan province of Iran, could be a potential area of cooperation between India and Türkiye. Given Türkiye's Sunni-majority population and its historically friendly relations with Iran, its involvement could be instrumental in addressing the volatile security situation in Baluchistan and ensuring the sustainability of this transcontinental connectivity.

As for Turkestan, it represents a significant source of untapped energy resources with the outstanding potential to contribute to global energy security. However, a central challenge for these countries is their landlocked status. Turkestan lacks direct access to major international ports, hindering their ability to efficiently export their energy resources to the global market.

Within the geopolitical landscape of Turkestan, Pakistan occupies a pivotal position for both the United States and Russia, demonstrably exceeding the strategic importance of India in this specific region. This is underscored by the United States' South Asia policy, prioritising Afghanistan and Pakistan in the fight against extremist groups like the Taliban and al-Qaeda (Jain, 2010, p. 115). Pakistan's geographical proximity and historical religious connections with the Muslim-majority states of Central Asia grant it significant leverage, influencing Russia's strategic calculations in the region (Jain, 2010, p. 32). Furthermore, Pakistan's role is deemed indispensable by the United

States in establishing peace and stability within Afghanistan, a nation crucial for regional security. In contrast, India's strategic significance for the US and Russia primarily lies outside the immediate sphere of Turkestan.

India's interest in Turkestan is driven by its growing energy demands and its desire to diversify its energy import sources. India views the vast oil and gas reserves of Turkestan as a potential hedge against dependence on traditional suppliers. Developing infrastructure projects that provide access to Indian Ocean Region (IOR) ports is crucial for facilitating the import of Turkestan's energy resources.

Türkiye, with its established trade routes, geographical proximity and historical bonds, aspires to be a key partner for Turkestan's energy exports. Collaboration on infrastructure development projects that connect Central Asian resources to Turkish ports on the Mediterranean Sea could be mutually beneficial. Furthermore, both India and Türkiye share an interest in reducing the reliance of Central Asian nations on Russia as a sole transit route for their energy exports. This diversification would enhance the economic and geopolitical impact of Turkestan's resource-rich states.

The landlocked regions of Eurasia present a complex geopolitical chessboard with multidimensional strategic interests for various actors. The Southern Caucasus, with its abundance of energy resources and strategic location, offers opportunities for cooperation in energy transportation, trade, and regional stability initiatives. India and Türkiye both see strategic value in the Southern Caucasus, aiming for influence and potential transit routes. Similarly, Turkestan's vast energy reserves attract the attention of India and Türkiye, both seeking to diversify their energy sources and establish trade partnerships. However, the landlocked nature of Turkestan necessitates infrastructure development projects to connect the region to IOR ports, potentially reducing dependence on Russia and creating new opportunities for global energy markets. As these regions continue to evolve, understanding the divergent strategies of key players like India and Türkiye will be crucial for navigating the complex geopolitical landscape of landlocked Eurasia.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has aimed to illuminate the multidimensional and evolving relationship between India and Türkiye, offering a comprehensive analysis that traces the historical development of their bilateral ties, examines the impact of Hindutva ideology on India's foreign policy, and explores the subtle yet significant strategic convergences and divergences between the two nations. Through this exploration, the research draws attention to how Hindutva ideology, particularly under the BJP-led government since Narendra Modi's rise to power in 2014, has noticeably influenced India's approach towards Türkiye. This influence is particularly evident in India's growing alignment with countries that share contentious relationships with Türkiye and in the way religious nationalism has shaped diplomatic priorities.

As a form of ethnoreligious nationalism with its emphasis on Hindu identity and culture, Hindutva, has become a significant force in Indian politics. This thesis has explored the evolution of this ideology and its impact on India's domestic and foreign policies. By analysing the historical background, key figures, and political developments associated with Hindutva, the study has aimed to understand its role in shaping India's worldview.

The relationship between India and Türkiye has been shaped by historical, cultural, and geopolitical factors. The key aspects of this relationship, including economic ties, security cooperation, and regional ambitions as well as the challenges and opportunities that have influenced the course of this bilateral partnership has been examined in this thesis.

A central focus of this research is the influence of Hindutva on India's foreign policy towards Türkiye. It has investigated how Hindutva and the current political climate in India under PM Modi in post-2014 period affect India's geopolitical positioning towards Türkiye. By analysing specific policies, statements, and actions, the study has sought to determine the extent to which Hindutva has impacted India's approach to Türkiye. Aiming to contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between ideology, domestic politics, and foreign policy, the study has sought to offer some insights

into the broader implications of religious nationalism on international relations by examining the case of India and Türkiye.

Comparing the geopolitical endeavours of India and Türkiye offers a useful way to comprehend their relationship. While shared interests can bring them closer, historical tensions, different beliefs, and competing goals can drive them apart. Recognising both the potential benefits of convergence and the challenges posed by divergence is essential for duly understanding this relationship. This thesis has focused on the political implications of religious nationalism in India, i.e. Hindutva, as a factor of divergence. Religious nationalism, where religious belief is linked to national identity, is a prominent force in today's world. It can influence a country's foreign policy in various ways, including supporting people of the same faith and causing problems with those of different faiths. History and theoretical perspectives can help us understand how religion and foreign policy are connected.

Understanding the changing nature of nationalism in India needs a full analysis of history, beliefs, and global factors. By examining different types of nationalism and their impact on Indian society and politics, researchers can provide valuable information for policymakers and academics. The study of nationalism in India reveals a varied landscape, shaped by historical events, beliefs, and social conditions. This analysis has explored different types of nationalism, including civic nationalism, ethno-religious nationalism, communalism, composite nationalism, two-nation theory, Hindutva, and cultural nationalism. Each type has distinct features and effects on Indian society and politics.

Turning back to religious nationalism, the ongoing conflict between Hindu and Muslim identities in the subcontinent can be traced back to the historical events, which laid the groundwork for Hindutva and the continuing challenges of creating a diverse and inclusive society in India. While it has boosted national pride for many Hindus, it has also raised worries about the decline of secularism and the treatment of minority groups. The historical context of Hindutva is also crucial to understanding its contemporary influence on Indian politics.

The 19th-century socio-political movements in colonial India significantly shaped all forms of nationalism in pre- and post-Partition India. In particular, Hindu nationalism

came to have a specific focus on a Hindu-centric history excluding Muslims, which contributed to a cohesive and militant Hindu identity. The British-imposed political developments further aggravated these tensions, leading to the Partition of 1947. The enduring conflict between Hindu and Muslim identities in the subcontinent can be traced back to these certain historical events in pre-Partition India such as the Partition of Bengal, the Morley-Minto Reforms, etc., which laid the groundwork for the rise of Hindutva and the ongoing challenges of maintaining a pluralistic and inclusive society in India.

The rise of Hindutva has been a significant development in Indian politics, with far-reaching implications for the nation's identity, governance, and social fabric. Hindutva, a Hindu nationalist ideology, has evolved from a fringe movement to a dominant force, particularly under the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led by Narendra Modi who has been the Prime Minister of India since 2014. While it has fostered a renewed sense of national pride among many Hindus, it has also raised concerns about the erosion of secularism and the marginalisation of minority communities.

Hindutva's enduring influence reflects its ability to engage with a broad range of voters, particularly the emerging Hindu middle class. However, its ascent has not been without controversy, as it has reignited debates about secularism, majoritarianism, and the role of religion in public life. The transition from Nehruvian secularism to Modi's Hindutva signifies a fundamental shift in India's governance and national vision as well as its foreign policy.

India's foreign policy has undergone substantial evolution since independence, driven by a variety of factors including domestic changes, regional developments, and global trends. Initially guided by Jawaharlal Nehru's non-aligned principles, India sought to maintain peace and avoid Cold War alignments. However, challenges such as the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and conflicts with Pakistan necessitated a shift towards a more assertive foreign policy. Under Indira Gandhi, India adopted a pragmatic stance, as seen in its actions during the Bangladesh Liberation War and its 1974 nuclear test, which showcased its growing regional influence. Despite these assertive moves, India's actions also led to strained relations and concerns among other nations.

The post-Cold War era marked a significant transformation in India's approach. Economic liberalisation and globalisation prompted a more outward-focused strategy, with India actively engaging in international economic institutions and strengthening ties with both regional and global powers. While this period opened new avenues for cooperation, persistent issues such as poverty, inequality, and regional conflicts continued to influence India's foreign policy priorities. The evolution towards a more pragmatic and economically driven foreign policy reflects India's adaptation to the changing global environment and its domestic challenges.

In recent years, the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its emphasis on Hindu nationalism have introduced new elements into India's foreign policy. The BJP's assertive regional stance and focus on domestic political agendas have affected its international relations, particularly with countries in South Asia. Despite the flourishing economic ties, ideological differences and domestic policies have posed significant challenges to the India-Türkiye relationship.

A scholarly inquiry into India's foreign policy must carefully consider the delicate balance between domestic priorities and international engagements. The evolving dynamics of both domestic and global factors can significantly influence a nation's foreign policy. In the case of India, understanding how domestic ideologies like Hindutva interact with international relations is crucial for comprehending its global position and future diplomatic strategies particularly towards Türkiye. By examining these factors, scholars can gain valuable insights regarding the India's foreign policy and its implications for both domestic and international affairs.

This thesis has sought to examine India's foreign policy towards Türkiye particularly in the post-2014 era by looking at how India acts in relation to Türkiye in three geostrategic regions: (1) Indian Ocean Region, (2) Eastern Mediterranean, and (3) Landlocked Eurasia.

It has been found out that, firstly, India and Türkiye have both intensified their involvement in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), focusing on maritime security, energy cooperation, and sustainable economic connectivity. Türkiye's increasing investment in Africa reflects its ambition as an emerging global actor. Although less studied compared to other emerging powers, Türkiye's activities in East Africa and South Asia indicate a

growing interest in these regions. Yet, Türkiye's South Asian engagement, traditionally centred on Pakistan, remains underexplored, suggesting a need for further research into its evolving role in the IOR.

Secondly, the Eastern Mediterranean also appears as another key area of focus presenting both opportunities and challenges for India and Türkiye. While mutual interests in maritime security, energy exploration, and conflict resolution exist, their stances on issues like Cyprus and relations with Israel significantly diverge. India's growing alignment with Greece, Southern Cyprus, and Israel reflects a strategic positioning against Türkiye. The strategic alliance between Israel and India, extending beyond geopolitical and economic considerations, may result from a shared ideological foundation of the current governments. This convergence of religious nationalisms, unified against a common enemy, i.e. Muslims, may have solidified this strategic partnership.

Thirdly, in Landlocked Eurasia, comprising of Southern Caucasus and Turkestan regions, India and Türkiye seek to expand their economic and strategic influence but with differing approaches. India prioritises energy security and connectivity initiatives like the International North-South Transport Corridor, while Türkiye focuses on cultural and historical ties with this area. The rivalry between India and Pakistan complicates both countries' engagement in Turkestan.

Looking at these regions as a whole, it has been found out that India takes particular meaningful steps in relation to Türkiye, which invite a thorough analysis. BJP-led India's strategic realignment in the IOR, Eastern Mediterranean, and Landlocked Eurasia has demonstrably resulted in a systematic marginalisation of Türkiye in Indian foreign policy. By strategically excluding Türkiye from key regional initiatives like the IMEC and INSTC, and by aligning itself with governments that are adversaries of Türkiye's regional ambitions, BJP government is sending a clear signal of its intention to reshape the regional balance of power. This suggests that Hindutva has played a significant role in shaping India's strategic choices towards Turkey in recent years. This strategic shift in India's foreign policy driven albeit partly by the rise of Hindutva can have far-reaching implications extending from hindering economic cooperation to intensifying geopolitical competition and even potentially destabilising the region.

While the research indicates that Hindutva ideology has played a significant role in shaping India's foreign policy towards Türkiye, particularly during the Modian era, it is important to note that the influence of Hindutva ideology on India's foreign policy is not all-encompassing and absolute. As it can be observed its hesitation in direct confrontation with Türkiye, India's longstanding diplomatic tradition as a leader of the Third World and its commitment to non-alignment continue to shape its foreign policy. Although Hindu ethnoreligious nationalism is a critical factor, it does not solely determine the direction of India-Türkiye relations. Economic interests, realpolitik, and the desire to balance the global powers remain powerful driving forces that can override ideological factors when necessary. The geopolitical and economic ties between India and Türkiye, though occasionally strained by the differences, continue to offer opportunities for collaboration in trade, investment, and infrastructure projects.

The relationship between India and Türkiye holds considerable promise for cooperation in the 21st century. Both countries share common goals in areas such as economic growth, regional security, and balancing the influence other global powers, which forms a solid basis for a mutually advantageous partnership. Yet, the presence of ideological differences and regional rivalries necessitates a commitment to open communication, mutual understanding, and a careful handling of historical sensitivities.

Future studies could explore the impact of the nationalist discourse within Armenia, Greece, and Southern Cyprus, particularly the role of religious nationalism, on their respective foreign policies and, consequently, on regional dynamics. While the nationalist movements in these countries may predominantly be shaped by socialistic traditions, it could be beneficial to analyse whether the Hindutva ideology in India has any counterparts in these countries, just as the case of Israeli Zionism, influencing their alignment with India.

Moreover, the evolving nationalist discourse within Türkiye, which supports closer ties with Asian nations including India, could offer potential benefits for analysis. By examining the specific narratives and ideologies driving this nationalist discourse, researchers can gain insights into Türkiye's foreign policy priorities and its potential for greater engagement with Asian countries. This could have significant implications for

India-Türkiye relations, as it could create new dimensions for cooperation and collaboration in various areas, such as trade, investment, and security.



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