

# Populism in India Under Modi Regime and its Implications for Pakistan

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## Abstract

This research assesses the rise of populist politics in India under the Modi regime and illustrates its implications for Pakistan. It studies the interaction between Hindutva politics, different mechanisms of populism, the emergence of illiberal democracy in India, and how it impacts India's domestic and foreign policies. The key findings of this paper focus on how Modi established himself as a populist leader and how populism in India has affected its relationship with the neighboring state of Pakistan. Based on qualitative research, this paper provides analytical input to conceptualize right-wing populism as a violent phenomenon that will have a far-reaching impact on Pakistan's National Security. Following Modi's win in 2018, he started working towards creating a majoritarian identity. To facilitate and further construct this narrative, Prime Minister Modi's government started making policies such as revoking *Article 370* in 2019, introducing the Citizenship Amendment Bill (2019), and implementing the National Register of Citizens to help mobilize the masses. This has resulted in right-wing populism being synonymous with Indian politics under the Modi regime. The populist Modi regime used anti-Pakistan rhetoric to attract voters and attain majoritarian rule in India. Examining the populist threats and challenges emanating from Modi's Hindutva government has become a focal point for scholars to comprehend the contemporary political landscape of the region.

## Keywords

Pakistan, Populism, India, Modi, National Security

## Introduction

In academia, scholars have offered a range of definitions to explain the complex character of populism. Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) define populism as an anti-

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secular ideology and see it as a radical movement of those who challenge the state's development with their right-wing agendas. Krieger and Zimmermann (2018) define populism as a united approach to international law. Populism has a far-reaching impact on the relationship between the state, institutions, and global governance. While populism in India penetrated rigidly with the success of Narendra Modi becoming Prime Minister, as a phenomenon, it can be understood by analyzing the policies and the politics of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Narendra Modi during his terms as the Prime Minister.

On the international stage, India significantly invested in Iran and Afghanistan, primarily to safeguard regional interests and curb Pakistan's influence. Moreover, India has also been funding terrorism and anti-state ethnic movements in Pakistan, as proven by the RSS Dossier presented to the media houses by former Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi ("Pakistan unveils dossier," 2021). He claimed that India, through its state-sponsored terrorism, is backing Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and Jamaat-Al-Ahrar. The post-Pulwama Attack incidents, involving the targeting of minorities, clerics, political figures, and civilians, along with threats to Pakistan's sovereignty, exemplify Modi's strategy for destabilizing Pakistan's security and regional peace. Modi's pro-Hindutva stance has not only allowed him to garner public support but also establish a united Hindu populist front (Kaltwasser et al., 2017).

Populism directly influences foreign policy, shaping the stability or instability of bilateral relations between populist states and others. It is often said to be the defining factor of the politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Varshney, 2021). In South Asia, it is seen as a form of right-wing politics led by a charismatic leader who unites and mobilizes the people to maximize their power. Populism in South Asia, particularly in India, challenges democratic principles and values (Joshi, 2020). The surge in populism in India can be attributed to its economically and politically limited integration with neighboring states. India has pursued ultra-nationalist policies that primarily benefit the Hindu elite in the region and their respective states (Dawn, 2021).

This increasing populism could potentially exacerbate issues for neighboring states, particularly Pakistan, which grapples with a fragile political and economic system, widespread poverty, and ethnic movements with anti-state sentiments, sometimes exploited by India to its advantage (Sandel, 2018). This paper employs a qualitative research methodology, drawing from a comprehensive array of both primary and secondary sources, to thoroughly investigate the surge of populism in India over the past decade. The primary sources encompass official documents, speeches, and statements from the Modi regime, providing an insightful lens into the policymaking process.

In tandem with primary sources, an extensive review of secondary sources, including academic works, think-tank analyses, and media reports, enriches the research with a broader contextual backdrop. This combination ensures a robust foundation for examining the policies enacted by the Modi government that have contributed to the rise of populism in India. The main focus of the research is the rise of populism in India in the last decade. The study analyzes the policies of the Modi regime responsible for this upsurge and how the intensification of populism in India has affected Pakistan, especially its security. Throughout the paper, the theory of populism is used to assess the formation of India's domestic and foreign policies and how these have direct implications for Pakistan (Kaul & Vajpeyi, 2020).

Within the framework of this theoretical perspective, this research aims to elucidate the underlying mechanisms that establish a connection between populism and policy decisions. The goal is to offer a comprehensive understanding of the direct implications of these policies, both for Pakistan and the broader geopolitical landscape.

This paper has formulated several pivotal questions to address the following. Firstly, the objective is to assess the extent of the BJP's success in utilizing Hindutva ideology as a tool of populism to secure and consolidate political power in India. Additionally, the research will investigate the implications of foreign policy stemming from this upsurge in populism. Secondly, we seek to identify the policies implemented by the Modi regime that have significantly contributed to the rise of right-wing Hindu Nationalism in India.

Lastly, the intention is to explore how the escalation of populism in India under Prime Minister Modi has led to increased challenges concerning Pakistan's security. Through an in-depth analysis of these questions, we aim to provide a more nuanced understanding of the intricate relationship between populism, policy decisions, and their consequences within India and the broader global context.

### **Exploring Populism: Core Concepts and Characteristics**

The concept of populism is comprehensively explored by Mudde and Kaltwasser (2017) in their book *Populism: A Very Short Introduction*. The main argument of the work is that populism is an approach supported by many people based on specific sets of ideas. Furthermore, the core tenets of populism can be distilled into three fundamental concepts, as elaborated below. Populism is a multifaceted political phenomenon characterized by several key features. Firstly, and perhaps most notably, populism is distinguished by its ability to attract and mobilize the masses. Populist movements and leaders often harness a broad society's grievances, frustrations, and aspirations, appealing to many individuals who feel marginalized or dissatisfied with the status quo. This mass appeal is a defining element of populism, as it seeks to rally significant popular support, often through charismatic leadership and simple, relatable messages. Populist leaders aim to establish a strong connection with the people, positioning themselves as champions of the common person.

Secondly, populism inherently involves a critique of the elites, viewing them as a smaller, privileged segment of society that often holds significant power and influence. Populist rhetoric frequently portrays these elites as detached from the concerns of the broader population, emphasizing the divide between the political, economic, and cultural elite and the everyday citizens. This critique of the elites is a fundamental component of populism's narrative, driving a wedge between the 'establishment' and the 'ordinary people.' Populist leaders position themselves as anti-establishment figures, promising to challenge the entrenched power structures and restore the people in decision-making.

Thirdly, populism asserts that politics should be conducted in a manner that resonates with and is accepted by the masses. Populist movements often prioritize a direct, emotional connection with the public, advocating for policies and approaches that reflect the preferences and concerns of everyday citizens. This emphasis on the will of the people can manifest in various ways, such as referendums, town hall meetings, or frequent engagement with the public through social media. Populist leaders argue that traditional political processes and institutions have become unresponsive to the needs of the majority, and they seek to revitalize politics by making it more accessible and accountable to the people they claim to represent. In sum,

populism is marked by its ability to attract a broad popular following, its critique of societal elites, and its commitment to politics that reflects the interests and aspirations of the masses. These three defining characteristics underpin the populist worldview and shape its governance and political engagement approach.

Meanwhile, Lucie Calléja (2020), in her journal article, writes about the populism practiced in India and how the country's relations, especially with Pakistan, are being affected by it. In contemporary times, two ideologies, which are usually seen in affiliation with populism, include nationalism and socialism. The right-wing supporters of the ideology are attached to the former one, while the left-wing populists opt for the latter.

In another scholarly work by Kaul and Vajpei (2020), the authors delve into the impact of nationalism on the principles of secularism and diversity. In the case of India, we can see how populism can affect civil society and how it can also be responsible for snatching civil liberties. For example, it is observed that due to the increase in right-wing populism in India, many minorities face difficulty practicing their religion. The following features can thus be highlighted:

### ***Populism as a Threat to the Liberal System***

Populism tends to thrive within fragile democratic systems, with the primary objective of establishing an 'illiberal democratic environment.' In such illiberal democracies, the formal democratic processes are ostensibly in place, but the system often operates in ways that counter democratic principles. While elections may still be held, the general public often lacks real power, as ultimate authority rests with a populist group that implements cultural policies that tend to govern in an oppressive manner (Bonet & Zamorano, 2021). While liberal democracies strive to offer their citizens the utmost freedom and opportunities for participation, there is a growing presence of non-democratic values in contemporary politics (O'Neil, 2010).

This also drives Indian populism, challenging liberal institutions, policies, and norms. According to populists, the liberalism of democracy weakens the political position of the masses and, hence, needs to be set aside for the proper functioning of democracy. Populism is perceived as a threat to liberal democracy because it views the liberal democratic system as the source of a sense of deprivation due to its perceived unjust policies. Liberal democracy is a system based on freedom and individual rights. The polarization of democracies worldwide shows how people and society are moving away from a liberal perspective and shifting towards populism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The rise of nativism and the shift towards unilateralism, as opposed to bilateralism and multilateralism, are viewed as reactions against the global world order, stemming from the urgency to protect one's ethnic and national identities (Miller, 2011).

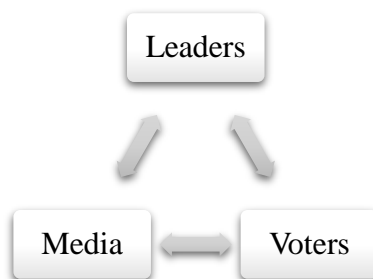
### ***Driving Mechanism of Populism***

Populism perceives liberal democracy as the breeding ground for elites who manipulate and exploit the system to further their interests, often at the expense of the broader population (Patomäki, 2020). The populist narrative regarding immigrants can be seen as inherently illiberal, leading many Western states to contend with the 'us versus them' debate. Notable instances include the UK's 2016 Brexit referendum, rooted in the idea that native populations were facing economic challenges due to immigration, as well as President Donald Trump's 'Make America Great Again' slogan, which carried an anti-immigrant undertone. Consequently, these examples can be regarded as populist decisions that oppose liberalism (Galston, 2018). The following section discusses the three main driving mechanisms of populism, as outlined below:

### Action Formation Mechanism

Within the Action Formation Mechanism, a noteworthy observation is the significant role that psychological triggers play in mobilizing the masses within the context of populism. The accompanying figures illustrate the triangular dynamics of the Action Formation Mechanism, where the populist movement takes shape through the intricate interplay between leaders and voters facilitated by the media. A favorable media portrayal of the Populist Party can effectively galvanize popular support. Media outlets often capitalize on the insecurities of the masses for their interests and advantages. Populist regimes manipulate the fears of the masses to secure their support through psychological tactics. This fear and anxiety can then morph into animosity against their rivals, ultimately translating into votes for the Populist Party.

**Figure 1.** Action Formation Mechanism



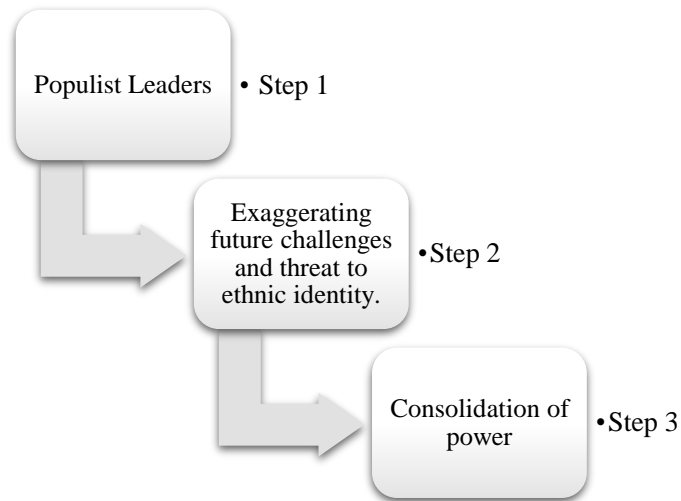
Source: Compiled by the author.

### Transformation Mechanism

The Transformation Mechanism comes into play following the emergence of ‘collective paranoia’ incited by the Populist Party. This consolidation is achieved with sensationalist media’s assistance and the masses’ cultivation of fear. These actions can be categorized into four primary methods, which are as follows:

- i. *Alienation*: Through alienation and the cultivation of collective paranoia, individuals are made apprehensive about the potential loss of their ethnonational identity.
- ii. *Victimization of the Majority*: By victimizing the majority and portraying them as a marginalized community, this strategy is employed to manipulate perceptions and sentiments.
- iii. *Drive to be ‘Great Again’*: By instilling in the masses a desire to become ‘Great Again,’ the Populist Party can create a powerful drive that may result in structural and systemic changes within the political system, with the support of both the media and the people.
- iv. Populist Parties employ the ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ debate as a tactic to isolate the masses from other segments of the community. This strategy generates a sense of urgency among the people to safeguard their ‘unique culture’ and ensure that their indigenous identity is not threatened by ‘outsiders’ who are, in fact, part of the same community. This approach fosters a collective paranoia within society, ultimately aiding the party in securing the support of the majority.

**Figure 2.** Transformation Mechanism



Source: Compiled by the author.

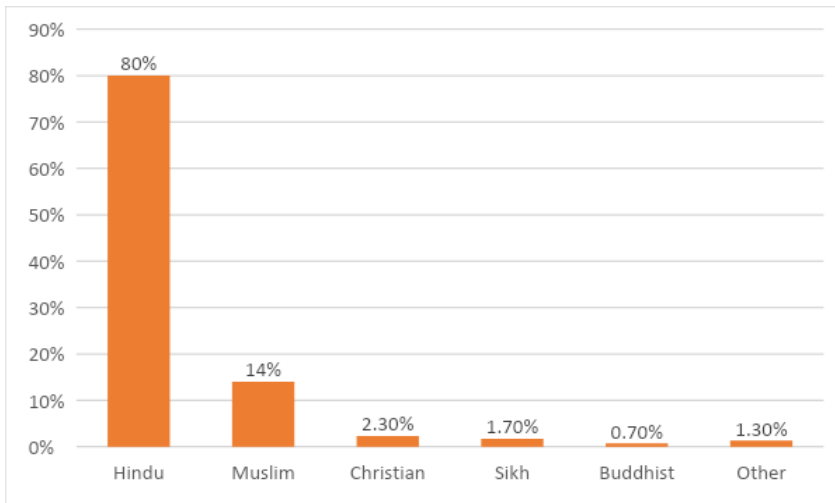
*Situational Mechanism*

Perceived deprivation and a sense of disrespect can also serve as catalysts for populism among the masses, driven by the prevalent discontent. Consequently, scholars such as Rodrik (2017) focus on the anxiety surrounding economic fairness rather than absolute equality. The term ‘angry populism’ aptly encapsulates debates surrounding ‘Fair Trade,’ which often center on ‘alienating the people’ and fostering divisions among different social groups. In the case of India, the media has been employed as a tool to promote the Hindutva policies of the BJP and has contributed to the cultivation of paranoia among the masses. It is also evident that the utilization of media for right-wing populist interests has resulted in an escalation of hostility and violence against minority groups in India.

**Populism in India: A Case Study**

Hindus comprise almost 80% of the population in India, constituting a clear majority. Muslims account for more than 14% of the population, making them the largest minority group. Christians comprise 2.3% of the population, while Sikhs comprise 1.7%. Other minority groups include Buddhists, Jains, and others (Kramer, 2021). This information is depicted in the chart below:

**Figure 3.** Religious Population of India



***The Emergence of the BJP as a Populist Party***

During the late 1970s, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, under the leadership of Vajpayee, was able to take control of the government through the coalition of three other parties, leading to the formation of the Janata Party. However, the government failed and disintegrated in 1979 due to specific internal conflicts and factionalism. This split resulted in the formation of the BJP in 1980, as certain leaders of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh refused to endorse the RSS as they considered it an extremist organization. With time, the Bharatiya Jana Sangh regrouped as the BJP and was led by Vajpayee, Murali Manohar Joshi, and Lal Krishan Advani (McDonnell, 2019). With the BJP’s emergence, Hindutva took center stage in Indian politics. The BJP has been a big advocate of Hindutva ideology; this ideology is in strong contrast to the Indian National Congress’s secular ideology and is focused more on Hindu Culture and trying to define Hindu values. No populist government is complete without a defining ideology, and Hindutva is that ideology for the BJP.

The populist notion of being a Hindutva nation leads the party policy tilted towards an anti-secular stance that is against the idea of a homogenous Indian population. Hindutva discards liberal democracy by opposing pluralism and canceling out any adversaries in making nationhood. In doing so, the BJP pursued a majoritarian rule that was carried out by Hindus or Indians who aligned themselves with the populist policies, thus confining the minorities to the corner. Modi clarifies the divide between the ‘true citizens,’ aka the Hindus, and the ‘courtesy citizens,’ referring to the minorities. He portrays minorities as a threat to the building of nationhood, which helps him create an anti-minority narrative among the majority, and this way, he can make populist votes (Raychaudhury, 2023). Populism in India has three main actors, which are as follows (Eatwell & Godwin, 2018):

- i. *The Elite:* In this case, the BJP portrays elites as actors against the Hindutva Agenda, basically the liberal factions. This entails the higher class and wealthy minorities. This form of populism is often called ‘ethno-populism’ as it is based on the identity of the people and the leader. These elites are often presented as anti-state agents harboring goodwill towards Pakistan.

- ii. *General Will:* In the same context, the people’s collective will is constructed to align with the will of the nationalist agenda of the party. For this purpose, various tools are used to make the minds of the general populace, for example, using media to construct Hindutva narratives.
- iii. *The People:* The most crucial factor in Populism is the People. The people in populism are referred to as the common individuals. In India’s case, the common man is associated with the Hindu majority, which has perceived that the BJP is the guardian of Hindu values. Thus, people must restore Hindu values to keep the BJP in power. Prime Minister Modi and his party accomplished this by creating a divide between the commoner and the minorities and also making sure the common person was against the minorities. In doing so, they also portray Pakistan as an enemy of Hindutva and are interfering in Indian matters by sponsoring the elites mentioned above and minority groups.

**Table 1.** Hindutva as the Causal Mechanism

<i>Action</i>	<i>How Populist Leaders Consolidate Power</i>	<i>How PM Modi Consolidated Power</i>
<i>Alienation</i>	Through alienation, they are scared of the loss of their ethnonational identity.	PM Modi exploited the already existing differences between Hindus and Muslims, claiming that they could not coexist, thus leading to alienation.
<i>Victimization of the Majority</i>	Through the victimization of the majority and making them feel like they are the marginalized community.	Muslims posed a threat to their culture, religion, and identity. This made the Hindus perceive themselves as a marginalized community.
<i>Drive to be ‘Great Again’</i>	Creating the drive to be ‘Great Again’ in the masses can lead to structural and systematic changes in the Political System by the Populist Party with the help of the media and the people.	Saffronization talks about India’s glorious past. Modi believes his destiny is to undo it and make India ‘Great Again.’

*Source:* Compiled by the author.

***PM Modi’s Use of Media as an Action Transformation Mechanism***

The media is one of the driving mechanisms for populism, and the BJP has made effective use of that. Modi took full advantage of new forms of media to communicate directly with the people. He used WhatsApp, SMS, MMS, 3D holograms, radio shows, and TV channels to connect and mobilize the masses. These strategies were heavily used during his election campaign in 2014. This extensive use of social media to mobilize his followers has been labeled ‘high-tech populism.’ (Bhattacharya, 2020). Modi established a strong media presence by institutionalizing Hindutva policies.



**Table 2.** BJP and INC performance in the general elections of 2014 and 2019

Year	General Election	Seats Won by BJP	Seats Won by INC
2014 General Election	16 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	336	59
2019 General Election	17 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha	352	91

Source: Economic Times of India (2019).

Since becoming Prime Minister, Modi has used media effectively and efficiently. Moreover, a continuous rise was observed in both media usage and reliance on it. However, instead of relying on the traditional methods of the press, he adopted modern trends like social media such as Twitter and Facebook (Calléja, 2020). By March 2022, PM Modi’s followers on different social media apps were:

Twitter	90.2 million
Instagram	77 million
Facebook	48 million
YouTube	16.3 million

PM Modi has centered his image on right-wing Hinduism and presented himself as a leader to whom the common people can relate. His anti-secular stance has made him a mobilizing force in his own right. The table below compares the qualities of Populist leaders in the light of BJP members and Congress members:

**Table 3.** Qualities of a Populist Leader

<i>Characteristics of Populist Leaders</i>	<i>Characteristics of PM Modi (BJP Populist Leader)</i>	<i>Characteristics of previous leaders under the INC</i>
<i>A Common Leader.</i>	Modi portrayed the INC as an elitist party and himself as a commoner person who came from a humble background. He positioned himself as a leader representing the common people.	The previous leaders under INC belonged to the ruling elite class, and their lifestyle had little in common with the masses.
<i>Security from the ‘others.’</i>	By taking a solid anti-Muslim stance, Modi promises that he will eliminate the perceived threats posed by Muslims.	The policies of the INC were less harsh towards Muslims, and India was promoted as a secular state.
<i>Ideology</i>	Modi has been advocating Hindutva ideology since day one.	The leaders of the INC never adopted an official ideology.
<i>Engage with masses</i>	Modi tries to engage with his followers through social media but refrains from giving press interviews.	The INC leaders tried to engage with the people through their speeches and interviews.

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<i>A populist leader is expected to be more authoritarian.</i>	The BJP has a centralized approach to decision-making.	The INC had a decentralized approach to decision-making.
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Source: Compiled by the Author.

***Anti-Minority Laws Introduced Since 2018***

A populist leader requires constant support from the masses to stay in power. Hence, they attain majority support by exploiting minorities, depicting them as a perceived threat. Under the banner of populism, minority groups frequently experience limitations imposed by stringent laws, and these regulations have a diverse range of effects on minority communities. A populist leader asserts that only they or their political party can effectively address the perceived threats. In the Indian context, the BJP has achieved success in portraying itself as the guardian against minority-related threats. Consequently, this strategy fosters contentment among the general populace, ensuring continued support for the populist leader and the popular narrative they have cultivated. Keeping this fact in mind, the Modi regime has introduced the following laws:

*Citizenship Amendment Bill 2019*

The enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) introduced by the BJP in 2019 was a rigid populist move. Although the bill was initially designed in 2016, it took the government three years to pass it; as the bill faced substantial opposition, many people protested that the law was illegal and went against India’s secular values protected by the constitution.

*Indian National Register of Citizens 2019*

Right after the enactment of CAB, another law was passed, the Indian National Register of Citizens. The basics of the NRC are that it is a record of all legal Indian citizens. It contains demographic information about all those people who, according to the 1955 Citizenship Act, are legal inhabitants of India. The data was first gathered in 1951, was only recently updated, and was limited to the state of Assam. However, it was announced in November 2019 that the register would now be stretched to the whole country (Raj, 2020). The aim was to identify all those people who have been illegally living in India so they could be detained and deported. It was a way to counter the high Muslim demographics in Assam and to make sure the Muslims remained a low minority legally.

*Article 370, Revoking Kashmir’s Autonomy*

The populist government of Modi was against *Article 370* as it gave an advantage to the ‘other’ at the expense of ‘the people.’ In addition to this, the Hindu nationalists believed that *Article 370* was a factor enabling terrorism in Kashmir. They further asserted that this article should have never come into force in the first place and labeled it as one of those acts that were put forward by the corrupt elites of INC to please the Muslims (Srivastava, 2019). Therefore, by diluting this Article, the Modi regime claimed it was fixing a past mistake, and many Hindus widely appreciated this move. India also labeled this undemocratic move as an ‘Internal Matter’ and that Pakistan had no right to discuss it at any International Forums (Al Jazeera, 2019).

**India’s Agenda and Narrative towards Pakistan**

The friendly neighborhood policy through which India establishes good relations with the neighboring countries is their way of encircling Pakistan. Under Prime Minister

Modi, India had specifically improved her bilateral relations with Afghanistan and Iran, two neighboring countries of Pakistan on its western borders. India and Iran had been working on naval collaborations in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean; this move was mainly to counter Pakistan and China’s economic cooperation in Gwadar. India had also been heavily investing in Iran’s Chabahar port for similar reasons.

The Chabahar port was supposed to create ease further for India to conduct trade with Afghanistan. However, after the 2018 reimposition of sanctions by the US, the IRCON deal fizzled out (Haidar, 2020). When talking about Afghanistan, India has always supported it in its claim over Pashtuns and has tried to assist Afghanistan economically as well. So, by improving relations with Pakistan’s neighbors, Iran and Afghanistan, India was trying to contain Pakistan’s influence, and this relationship with both neighbors made it easier for India to fund terrorism in Pakistan due to the economic impact that India held over these two states (Bhatti et al., 2019). The table below explains the relationship between India and Pakistan:

**Table 4.** Roots of Rivalry between India and Pakistan

<i>Roots of rivalry</i>	<i>India’s Stance</i>	<i>Pakistan’s Stance</i>	<i>BJP’s Narrative</i>
<i>Different religion</i>	The majority of people in India are Hindus.	The subcontinent was divided based on religion, and Pakistan was formed as a Muslim-majority state.	In line with the ideology of Hindutva, the BJP believes that the subcontinent’s partition should never have occurred.
<i>Territorial conflict</i>	Kashmir was a princely state in the Indian Subcontinent during British rule. The Maharaja of Kashmir signed the Instrument of Accession (October 1947).	Pakistan wants a plebiscite to be held in Kashmir and supports Kashmiris’ Right to self-determination.	In 2019, the BJP revoked Articles 370 and 35A, which granted Kashmir autonomy and made the Indian constitution applicable there.
<i>Geopolitical Conflict</i>	India wants to be the regional hegemon, but the rising influence of neighboring China threatens its position.	Pakistan and China have a strong alliance and are involved in several developmental projects, such as CPEC.	To counter the Sino-Pakistan alliance, India, under the BJP, has been solidifying its alliance with the US, e.g., the QUAD Security Dialogue.

*Source:* Compiled by the author using the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation (2019).

***Sponsoring Terrorism in Pakistan***

India has been funding terrorism in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan, the largest province of Pakistan. The province of Baluchistan not only covers 42% of the country but also has immense strategic importance. It is home to Gwadar Port, which has the potential to transport a significantly large portion of global oil. It also serves as an energy corridor between the Central Asian States and the Arabian Sea for shipping oil and gas. Balochistan has also witnessed insurgency movements that were and are being backed by India to create problems for Pakistan (Khetran, 2017). Moreover, the Indian government is also trying to hamper Chinese-funded CPEC projects going on in

Balochistan. Consequently, PM Modi has tried to use the Balochistan insurgency to defame Pakistan on numerous occasions, for example:

- i. During his speech on Independence Day in 2016, he pointed out how Pakistan has been abusing human rights in Balochistan. In 2016, Kulbhushan Jadhav, an Indian naval officer, was arrested in Balochistan, and he admitted that he was working with the insurgents to destabilize Balochistan as well as to disrupt the CPEC advances made there.
- ii. To promote its propaganda, India's foreign intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), launched a web radio in the Balochi language (Venugopal, 2016).
- iii. In 2018, it also established a 'Free Balochistan' office in New Delhi; several insurgents from Baluchistan, along with the members of RAW, work for this office (Khan, 2021).

### ***Portraying Pakistan as a Terrorist State***

Ever since 9/11, Pakistan has been associated with allegations of sponsoring terrorism. India has played a significant role in defaming Pakistan. India has made sure to capitalize on the situation to its advantage; a recent example is the Pulwama attacks of 2019. In the suicide attack carried out in the Pulwama district of Indian-Occupied Kashmir, 40 Indian police officers lost their lives. At the same time, it was reported that Jaish-e-Muhammad, an extremist Islamic group operating from Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack. The Indian government asserted that the Pakistani government had a role in this matter. Despite Pakistan's denial of any involvement in the attacks, the Indian Prime Minister continued to blame Pakistan for the attack. (BBC, 2019).

### **Challenges for Pakistan's Security Due to India's Populist Agenda**

India's domestic politics directly impact its foreign policy regarding Pakistan. This is because the BJP government has been using Pakistan to justify its draconian laws, such as the Citizenship Amendment Act or the revocation of *Article 370*. These fascist government policies that aim to turn Muslims of India into second-class citizens have a direct negative impact on India's image as the world's biggest democracy as well. Furthermore, India's domestic issues, exacerbated by the Narendra Modi government's harsh tactics, have become the primary obstacle to its foreign policy successes (Pritam, 2020).

### ***Emerging Ethnic Genocide in India and Potential Refugee Problem for Pakistan***

The rise of Hindutva Politics in India has led The Genocide Watch Group, founded by Gregory Stanton, to sound alarm bells to inform the world about the potential ethnic cleansing and genocide of Muslims in India. A global summit from February 26<sup>th</sup> to February 28<sup>th</sup> was held in New Delhi titled 'India on the Brink: Preventing Genocide.' Former Attorney Greg Gordon, who had worked with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda and Human Rights Activists from around the world, concluded the summit by saying that the genocide in India was already underway (Sen, 2022). The spread of false information, the dehumanizing of the minorities, and the calls for violence against them were all proof of the fact that the ethnic conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India had resulted in the start of genocide, targeting the Muslims.

### ***Indian False Information Campaign and Cyberwarfare against Pakistan and their Implications***

The BJP argues that the present corrupt elite cannot be trusted to represent the pure people of India, that is, the Hindus. Additionally, they emphasized that these elites do not exhibit enough firmness toward the neighboring country, Pakistan, which is considered a significant adversary under Hindutva ideology (Varshney, 2021). According to them, an Islamic country being born out of India is the height of disrespect and something against which all Hindus need to unite. In propagating Hindutva ideology, the spread of disinformation is considered to be an essential instrument of the state's policy. The deliberate deceiving of the masses through the help of mass media is referred to as the spread of disinformation. The BJP government used the media actively to spread their propaganda and create situations that benefitted them (Saleem, 2021). One prominent instance of India disseminating propaganda to undermine Pakistan on a global stage was revealed in 2020 by a European NGO named 'Disinfo Lab.' They disclosed their 15-year-old operation, 'Indian Chronicles,' which began in 2005. India was exposed, manipulating information, spreading fake news, and conducting research on ways to create anti-Pakistan sentiments.

The *Disinfo Lab* reported that the Indian Government was operating more than seven hundred media channels across more than a hundred countries with the sole purpose of spreading misinformation against Pakistan. The Indian Government strategically utilized registered non-governmental organizations to serve its interests. Specifically, it aimed to garner support from international governmental organizations such as the UN or IMF by tarnishing Pakistan's reputation. This operation also dug out dark secrets used by the Indian Government, such as identity theft and the hijacking of dead NGOs. These media outlets and NGOs worked to create dissent in Pakistan and aimed to damage Pakistan's reputation in the international arena. The dissemination of disinformation against Pakistan was aimed at isolating the country within the global system while also seeking to weaken its financial conditions. A prominent example involves the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), where India lobbied against Pakistan's interests to have it blocked (Shukla, 2019).

### **Pakistan's National Security Policy in Response to Rising Populism in India**

The policies, legislation, and political actions of the BJP government are all pointing toward the gradual erosion of Indian secularism. India is home to 1.41 billion people, out of which 19% are comprised of minorities (Sahoo, 2022). The Hindutva government and its aim of having a majoritarian government in place will lead to the loss of religious freedom for minorities in the state. Indeed, the impact of this trend is already evident in the laws implemented by the BJP's government.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of January 2022, Pakistan launched its first public National Security Policy. This NSP deals with six main aspects of the state: Economy, defense, national cohesion, foreign policy, internal security, and territorial integrity. The NSP was created after seven years of consultation and analysis by the National Security Committee. This policy was introduced as the first-ever strategy that is both inclusive and citizen-centric in its basis. The National Security Policy (NSP) is set to undergo annual revisions, and its primary emphasis lies in deterring conflicts and actively pursuing peaceful resolutions.

In the National Security Policy (NSP), within the 'Neighborhood' section, it is highlighted that the rise of Hindutva-driven politics in India is a matter of profound

concern and directly impacts Pakistan's security. Moreover, the section also discussed the unilateralism India has taken under Prime Minister Modi and how these actions are expected to create hurdles for developing peace in the region ("National Security Policy of Pakistan 2022-2026", 2022, p.36). The use of media and cyberspace to create and spread false information about Pakistan has also been cited in the document as a critical hurdle for developing peace and cordial relationships between the two neighbors.

The NSP credits India with limiting Pakistan's eastward connectivity with the help of its regressive approach. This regressive approach is also a significant hurdle in cordial relationships between both states. For lasting peace, India must involve the international community in addressing the Jammu and Kashmir issue. However, India sees it as an internal matter. Pakistan holds that it will renew trade ties with India only after they resolve the crisis in Jammu and Kashmir. While India claims it will only continue trade alliances with Pakistan after Pakistan effectively deals with its terrorist problems (National Security Division, 2022).

### ***Impediments to Sustainable Peace in South Asia***

Sustainable Peace means providing options like collaborative problem-solving, dialogue, and state cooperation. This means that the states are unlikely to opt for violence, oppression, or conflict among themselves. Sustainable Peace in a region can be measured by the fair and equal distribution of resources, highly functional governments, low levels of corruption, high education levels, good relationships among neighboring states, and a free flow of information (Coleman, 2022). If all of these factors are present, a region has sustainable peace, but the absence of these factors in the South Asian region shows us how sustainable peace is lacking. Instead, we can see negative peace among the South Asian states. Negative Peace is the lack of violence due to a ceasefire. The conflict has not been transformed but instead has been prevented (Dačić, 2018).

### **Conclusion**

Populism, akin to other ideologies, possesses a defined structure and driving force. The primary objective of populist regimes is to pursue an 'illiberal democracy,' where the populace is repressed and lacks genuine power. Populism often revolves around the people mobilizing against 'the Elite,' becoming the prevailing agenda for the majority. However, foreign policy changes under Prime Minister Modi have remained relatively modest in India. For the most part, he has continued the legacy of previous leaders, focusing on core objectives such as becoming a regional power, expanding India's economic influence, and addressing the threats from China and Pakistan.

Two discernible ways in which the impact of populism on Indian foreign policy manifests are the increased centralization in decision-making and a more assertive approach toward Pakistan. It is not surprising that the relationship between India and Pakistan has deteriorated under the BJP government, given the challenges this presents for Pakistan. The effects of rising populism in India are evident, from the majority-centric government to calls for the ethnic genocide of minorities. Incidents like the Karnataka Hijab Ban, the Haridwar Hindutva Conference, and the blatant boycott of Muslim-owned shops in India depict the rise of right-wing populism.

These incidents, among others, have raised global concerns about the surge in hate crimes against Muslims. India has faced criticism from Pakistan, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and numerous states and prominent NGOs concerned with the potential genocide against Muslims. This has already impacted Pakistan,

ranging from the potential refugee crisis that could create chaos to the use of cyber warfare against Pakistan by right-wing Hindutva media outlets, fostering an ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ narrative that negatively affects Pakistan’s reputation.

However, tensions between the two nations will persist as long as the Kashmir conflict endures. The resolution of the Kashmir Issue is contingent upon both states actively listening to each other and moving towards cooperation. The prospect of resolving the Kashmir Issue hinges on both states consciously opting for positive peace or if its resolution aligns with the national interests of both parties. In this anarchic world, states are likely to prioritize national interest, and currently, the interests of both states and their governments involve exploiting the Kashmir issue to garner mass support.

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