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## Globalization and the Conduct of Hindu Radicalism in Authority\*

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### Abstract

Following the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the sociopolitical rivalry between Hindu religious nationalists and secular democratic nationalists that arose during the independence struggles, and whose intolerance precipitated the conflict, persists to this day. Following an extended period of dominance as one of the two major political parties in India, the Indian National Congress Party (INC), which espouses Indian secularism rooted in Gandhian socialism, social democracy, secularism, and democratic socialism, has been at the helm of Indian politics for approximately three decades. However, Hindu nationalism will soon supplant INC's political preeminence, which forms the foundation of the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) political ideology. This article aims to shed light on the voting patterns of supporters of radical Hindu political parties over a three-decade period (1980-2014). Additionally, it will examine the impact of globalization on the dynamics of interaction between radical Hindus and adherents of other religious minorities in India, including Islam and Christianity. The primary research inquiry of the article is as follows: To what extent has globalization influenced the voting patterns of radical Hindu political party supporters? Furthermore, what impact has globalization had on the dynamics of interaction between adherents of Hinduism and other faiths in India? Its hypotheses assert that Hindu radicalism is shifting toward moderation due to globalization. In addition, individuals are distancing themselves from radical Hindu parties, and these parties are losing their political base as a result of the effects of globalization.

**Keywords:** Bharatiya Janata Party, Globalization, Hinduism, Hindutva, Radicalism, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)

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## 1. Introduction

Asia, the cradle of the world's major religions (Islam, Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, etc.), is confronted with life-threatening religious conflicts. Within this venerable ancient continent, adherents of Hinduism and Islam, two prominent global religions, have coexisted and influenced one another for centuries. However, the Indian independence movement against British colonial rule resulted in widespread communal violence, which claimed the lives of thirteen million people (Fatah, 2016) and resulted in millions of emigrants during the partition of the Indian subcontinent. The problem, however, continues with communal Hindu forces against Indian minorities, especially 13.4% of the population, who are Muslim (Indian 2001 census) and Christians, and constitute the third largest religious community in India, with 2.3%. The BJP is currently in the process of attaining a political position; however, in its early political years, communal slogans primarily served as an emotional mobilizer for the party's support base. However, this trend is expected to change, especially in light of the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha (LS) or Indian parliament (lower house with 545 members) election. This article will examine the aforementioned political transformations.

## 2. Community-Based Forces and Its Outcomes in India

The British colonial system's replacement of centuries of Islamic rule over the Hindu majority did not impoverish them, nor did the Indian independence movement contribute to the partition of the Indian subcontinent based on religion. Neither did the partition bring an end to this catastrophic end; rather, it facilitated the Muslim separatist movement over Kashmir, in which Pakistan

participated, which was one of the causes or foundations of the rising tide of Hindu chauvinism and right radicalism.

The "Family of Associations" (Sangh Parivar), is comprised of prominent Hindu nationalist organizations such as the "National Patriotic Organization" or the "Association of National Volunteers," with the primary one being the "Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh" (RSS) and the others including the "World Hindu Council" (Vishva Hindu Parishad - VHP), Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Bajrang Dal, and Shiv Senna..., which constitute the "family" (Sangh Parivar). The BJP serves as the political representative of these organizations.

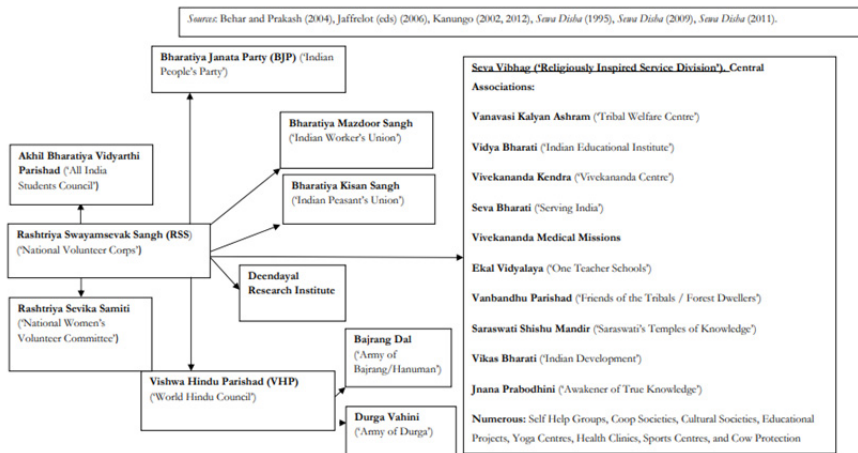
The BJP is directly or indirectly governed by the RSS, as most of its notable founders and leaders, including Lal Krishna Advani, were RSS members. Advani is widely recognized for his staunch support of a nationalist agenda dominated by right-wing Hindus and his reputation as a hard-core militant Hindutva. Subsequently, in 1987, the prime minister Narendra Modi affixed his membership to the RSS and the BJP. The former Indian prime minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who passed away, was also an RSS member.

The aforementioned groups are commonly referred to as "Saffron" groups, which are "one of the holiest colors" that are "strongly associated with Hinduism; a symbol of purity since impurities were burned away by fire... a supreme being... a symbol of the quest for light," as stated by Mostafavi (2014, p. 154). An ideology known as "Hindutva" or "Hindu-ness" brought them together; more precisely, it was Hinduism that served as their political ideology; its objective was the establishment of the Hindu nation (Rashtra). It comprises three frontline organizations—the RSS, the VHP, and the ABVP (All India Student's Council), an

affiliated student organization. Auxiliary organizations, including labor unions, think tanks, and rural development organizations, which are not typically associated with religious fundamentalist groups, also advance the Hindu nationalist agenda.

As an example, the Sangh Parivar comprises a highly influential labor organization known as the Indian Workers Union (Bhartiya Mazdoor Sangh BMS), which has been vocal in its criticism of foreign economic ties on occasion. Non-governmental organizations affiliated with the RSS, including the Service Department's "Seva vibhag" (SV), the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA), and the Bharat Vikas Parishad (BVP), have been actively engaged in initiatives pertaining to the tribal communities of India. Vidhya Bharati (VB), or the Indian Enlightenment, is a network of schools. Investigations into rural development have been initiated by the Deendayal Research Institute (DRI).

**Figure 1. The Sangh Parivar Groups Chart**



Source: Alder, 2015, p. 214

"Hindutva" is a cultural, racial, and religious entity, of which Hinduism is merely a component. It emphasized the imperative for adherents of Hinduism to surpass their biological and social distinctions and attain their fundamental unity, instigating Hindu unity (sangathan), the Hindus' organization. The RSS is one of the primary organizations in this regard. The British colonial era was the ideological cradle from which Hindu nationalism emerged. The term "Hindutva" was initially introduced by activist and writer Veer D. Savarkar in 1923 to encompass the Hindu faith's historical, political, and spiritual dimensions. Savarkar intended for Hindutva to be a political and cultural identity rather than overtly religious. He espoused the establishment of a Hindu Rashtra (nation) that would be grounded in Hindu values and traditions (Aoun et al., 2012, p. 26). "Hindutva" refers to the way of life associated with Indian culture; however, during the 1980s, Sangh Parivar employed this term as a political term. The emergence of Hindutva discourse in modern India is characterized by a militant Hindu chauvinism and the desire to further entrench male-defined Hindu traditions.

Gandhi, the prominent leader of the Indian independence movement, believed that "the need of the moment is not one religion but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of different religions" (Joseph, 2012, p. 419). However, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu extremist organization established in 1925 to safeguard Hindu traditions and nationalism, and its allies in 'The Sangh Parivar' as "the source of Hindutva (Kanungo, Aug, 2-8/ 2003, p. 3297) consider Hinduism "a big umbrella term, referring to any and all forms of subcontinent-born religions" (Mostafavi, 2014, p. 14) by adopting an exclusive definition. Hinduism believes in equality of all religions; as the Gandhian ideal of "sarva dharma samabhav" as well as the

common tenet of Hinduism, which literally means that all religions are equal to or harmonious with each other. However, recent interpretations of this statement have led some to conclude that "all religions are the same", that they all consist of distinct routes to God, and have the same spiritual objectives, as expressed in the Nehruvian stance of "dharma Nirpekshta", which means equal indifference to all religions. The Sangh Parivar's adoption of the Hindu nationalist ideology poses the greatest danger to this standard, as it allows Hindus to regularly use violence and discrimination against Indian religious minorities.

The 'Hindu Nation' is a central tenet of the "Sangh" ideology, which denies the fundamental rights of non-Hindu Indians and excludes them from society. The notion, which has persisted thus far, manifests itself frequently in various forms, such as communal unrest across India, resulting in the loss of life and the destruction of property, particularly among Indian minorities. Beyond a mere threat to law and order, communal violence must be regarded as the manifestation of a highly negative relationship between religious communities.

The historical record of Indian politics demonstrates the triumphs of the Bhartiya Jana Sangh Party (BJS) and its current successor, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The BJP functions as the political arm of the RSS and is an integral component of the RSS's Sangh Parivar. This organization seeks to influence every stratum of Indian society. BJS served as the precursor to the BJP; it originated in 1951 and ended in 1977. BJS is a notable illustration of a political party infiltrated by prominent radical communal organizations such as RSS to achieve their own political objectives. Education groups, militant wings, and unions representing students and workers are additional Sangh Parivar organizations.

Consequently, the RSS continues to constitute the "umbilical cord" of the BJP, exerting influence over its ideological tenets, personnel selection, and leadership. The RSS membership is prevalent among most of the BJP's leadership and members, reflecting these ongoing ties (Ogden, 2009, p. 1). The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) serves as the political entity that aspires to secure seats in the Indian parliament and, as a result, establish control over both central and state governments. This signifies the ascendancy of Hindu nationalism, an ideology that has recently experienced a surge in support. The BJP won 282 seats in the 16<sup>th</sup> LS election; an increase from two seats in the 7<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, in just three decades. The BJP formed a government five times; it was in power for thirteen days in 1996, thirteen months in 1998, 1999, 2014, and finally in 2019, which has lasted for nearly five years.

According to commentators, between 1987 and 1993, manifestations of Hindu nationalism occurred at the intersection of the increased assertiveness of various new claimants to political power and the efforts of Hindu nationalists to mobilize and consolidate a Hindu vote bank (Rajagopal, 2001, p. 235). The trend signifies strengthening their position on the battlefield of political parties in India. However, a comparison of the BJP's voting share over the past four decades reveals that while it rose from 07.74% in the 7<sup>th</sup> LS election of 1980 to 31% in the 16<sup>th</sup> LS election of 2014, these percentage changes do not correspond with the party's seat gains in the Indian parliament. The 16<sup>th</sup> LS achieved the highest performance at 31% and 282 seats. The BJP won the following election results: 07.74% in the 8<sup>th</sup> election, 11.36% in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 20.11% in the 10<sup>th</sup>, 20.29% in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 25.59% in the 12<sup>th</sup>, 23.75% in 13<sup>th</sup>, 22.16% in 14<sup>th</sup>, 18.80% in 15<sup>th</sup>, and 31.00% in the 16<sup>th</sup> (India, 2009, p. 88)

Numerous factors contribute to the increase in the BJP's share of seats in the LS. Historically, Indian culture and people have generally distanced themselves from radicalism. Consequently, they are more receptive to the INC and its leaders, such as Nehru and Gandhi, and their ideas and personalities. However, despite the INC's prosperous and protracted rule in India, it has suffered the loss of notable leaders, including Mahatma Gandhi, Indra Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi, in various assassinations. As a result, the leadership was handed over to Rajiv's widow, Sonia Gandhi, of Italian origin, who was not capable enough to manage the party and country' move to confront inflation, terrorism, separatism, and Hindu nationalism. As a result of the BJP's ascent to power on the back of Hindu nationalism and the demonstration of good governance by its radical Hindu technocrats, such as Modi, the party is enlarging its sway over the foundations of power in India.

### **3. The Changing of Election Slogans**

'Better life' for Indians was the central BJP election slogan in all but the ninth, tenth, and eleventh LS elections, which were influenced by the Hindutva forces' destruction of the Babri Mosque. The BJP successfully increased its position in those elections by claiming to have quelled the tides of Hindu sentiment to attain power. Hindutva factors have influenced certain elections, which were identified as contributing to the BJP's defeat. For instance, in 2004, when Mr. Narendra Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat, a state ruled by the BJP at the time, the Hindu Sangh Parivar perpetrated violence against the Muslim minority in this state. Presently serving as the prime minister of India, Modi stated, "The BJP had lost in part due to the mismanagement of the Gujarat riot" (Adeney & Saez 2005, p. 249). Modi was a significant figure



in the 2009 Lok Sabha election as well, although was later deemed an important figure in the BJP's defeat; consequently, the BJP realized that it needed to distance itself from Hindutva extremism in order to secure a foundational position in the government. Furthermore, the Sangh Parivar is aware of the fact that a resurgence of radical "Hindu nationalist politics by the BJP would alienate its allies and delay the party's return to power" (Adeney & Saez 2005, p. 250). Following an extended period of employing communal slogans, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) openly declared:

A country as vast and pluralistic as India cannot be ruled only by an ideological party such as the Jana Sangh. It has to be an aggregative party [...] I (I. k. Advani) propounded that either we limit our objectives as an ideological party and fight election in some states or corporations, but if we aspire to become a ruling party in India, we cannot be limited as an ideological party [...] to rule India, we have to be inclusive (Bhagat, 2016, p. 166).

Furthermore, there is no indication of communal-political rallies or BJP slogans in the 2014 election, as in previous elections. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, former prime minister of India under the ruling BJP government and former member of the RSS since 1941, was quoted as saying, "Modi needed to be removed if the BJP was to win national confidence" (Adeney & Saez 2005, p.260). However, in the most recent Lok Sabha election in India, the focus shifted from Modi's economic triumph in Gujarat to the communal unrest that marred the prosperous Indian state under his long rule. Nevertheless, the BJP's position between nationalism and Hindutva allows it to be manipulated to attract Indian votes. However, the party's structural dilemma is whether or not a Hindutva-based party can command a substantial portion of the vote and come to power

on its own. The response provided by L.K Advani was negative. Figure 2 shows Lal Krishna Advani Serving a Piece of His Birthday Cake to Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India

**Figure 2.** Lal Krishna Advani Serving Narendra Modi



Source: NarendraModi, 2020

#### **4. The Effect of Globalization**

The present inquiry concerns the impact of globalization trends as an external factor on the socio-political landscape of India, which has influenced Hindu radical forces perspective. In the past thirty years, rapid changes have beset humanity, including India, which has 17% of the world's population and is threatened by the brutality

of communal forces, which reveals the dark side of violence in nonviolent Indian culture. The world is shrinking, and "computer, television, cable, satellite, laser, fiber-optic, and microchip technologies are combining to create a vast interactive communications and information network that has the potential to provide every individual connection to others (Barber, 1992).

In India, modernity confronts tradition directly. As a phenomenon generally regarded as inevitable and beyond the control of anyone (Benoist 1996, p. 117), globalization is currently breaching or will soon breach the borders of the political, cultural, social, religious, and economic spheres. Furthermore, it has infiltrated various autonomous units across the globe, whether with or without the consent of their guardians, and is now exerting its influence upon them. India is also affected by globalization, which is regarded as a positive process and a shift toward moderation of cultures and their radical aspects. During this period, media communication has flourished in India as a "cultural industry" (as accurately assessed by the "Frankfort school of thought"). A growing middle class has accepted, in fact, a mutated form of global progress, resulting from hybridization between distinctive respect and a distinct sense of progress (Gangopadhyay, 2010, p. 98). India witnessed the onset of accelerated globalization in the early 1990s, which subsequently extended to encompass cultural and social dimensions. While organized religion began to decline in industrialized Europe during the 19th century, the situation in South Asia has been essentially the polar opposite of this trend. As the subcontinent evolved and reinvented itself, religion strengthened, and faith expanded (Dalrymple, 2009, p. 2). As India globalizes, "India is becoming increasingly Hindu," according to Meera Nanda (2009, p. 239). Historiographically, it has been

influenced by various waves of globalization, beginning with the Aryans and progressing through British colonialism to the current accelerated globalization process of the last two to three decades. A new era of globalization began with the liberalization process that the government of Rao decided upon in the final decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During this period, the impact of powerful images, generated by television channels and print media on Indian society began to shape and control the populace's culture, common sense, and beliefs. A media that actively advances the ruling class's ideology, particularly through the establishment of hegemony. Educated Indians have developed a tendency to conflate Hindu signs and symbols with those of Indian culture due to their upbringing in a steady stream of religious, media, and other cultural discourses that portray them as emblematic of the nation (Nanda, 2009, p. 38).

According to the 2009 survey, newspapers maintain their position of authority because they are consumed by more than half (53%) of literate youth, or 177 million individuals. The estimated readership of the 6,000 magazines in India is 68 million. In 1996 there were approximately 50 television channels; by 2010, that number had surpassed 500. Hindutva, which delivered numerous populist messages to Indians who had endured Islamic invasions (the Indian Mughal Empire) and Christian (British colonialism) cultural invasions in the previous centuries, is also aided by globalization. Hindu nationalism does not exist solely in the realm of ideas (Gangopadhyay, 2010, p. 28), and it is interconnected with a multitude of actors both within and outside India. Globalization may be increasing India's wealth and, arguably, its materialistic citizens' preoccupation with religion; however, it is concurrently politicizing religion and fostering a more religious Indian populace.

A novel Hindu religiosity is increasingly permeating daily life's private and public spheres (Dalrymple, 2009, p. 3).

According to Nanda (2009, p. 54), the BJP perceived globalization as the platform through which India would reclaim its rightful position in the international community. This was exemplified by the statement made by Jaswant Singh, a BJP's national cabinet member during the NDA regime from 1998 to 2004, who oversaw finance, external affairs, and defense. Singh remarked, "Look at what is happening in the knowledge industry... we are reaching out to the world and registering our presence through globalization. Today, the Indian entrepreneur is celebrated" (Nanda, 2009, p. 54). Prominent Hindu extremists who support globalization include Narendra Modi, who advocates for a free market and an individualistic interpretation of Hinduism. Such individuals have gained significant attention from international businessmen and industrialists, earning them the label of Hindutva neo-liberals. The subsequent faction comprises individuals endeavoring to establish a secular (or, at the very least, non-Hindutva) right-wing party that would reject the polarizing anti-Muslim and anti-Christian stances of the BJP and the RSS in favor of popularizing traditional liberal stances concerning individual liberties and rights, limited government, and religious autonomy (i.e., state separation). Those who hold this view can be characterized as non-Hindutva neo-liberals (Nanda, 2009, p.56). According to Nanda (2009, p. 59):

Hindutva neoliberals advocate for the state to actively support the revival of Hinduism through the utilization of public resources; to have a minimal impact on economic matters but a maximum role in the propagation of Hinduism. The BJP belongs to the school of philosophical liberalism founded on the tenet of honoring the rights-bearing individual.

Consequently, the Indian state and its agents function under the implicit presumption that Hinduism represents the national ethos, or way of life, which every Indian must come to acknowledge and embrace, rather than merely one religion among many practiced by the Indian populace. As a result, policymakers and politicians representing diverse political stances have no qualms about allocating public funds and utilizing public infrastructure to advance Hinduism under the pretext of promoting Indian culture internationally and domestically (Nanda, 2009). Hindu nationalists hold a belief in India's spiritual superiority on a global scale. They interpret the universal mission of "Hindu philosophy" as a "spiritual corrective" to the excessively materialistic and rationalistic Western world. This ideal continues to be a pillar of modern Hindu nationalism, and they proclaim the twenty-first century as "the Hindu century" based on holism and integralism (Hansen, 1999, p. 230).

Thus, it is evident that India, a significant participant in the shrinking world of organs, is experiencing both the positive and negative effects of globalization. In the ancient and medieval periods and the current era of accelerated globalization, this nation and its people have been significantly influenced culturally by neighboring civilizations such as Iran (in the West and North West) and China (in the North and North East). Furthermore, they were influenced by Islam and European civilizations in previous decades. Hindu nationalism and the political right wing in India, despite contending with certain cultural repercussions of globalization, primarily leverage its potential to expand its influence among the Indian middle class. As Modi has demonstrated, the ascent to power of the BJP does not radicalize Hinduism. On the contrary, radical Hindus will contribute to

economic development, integration into the global economy, and development rather than incite violence and sectarian strife; thus, globalization influences radical Hinduism positively, encouraging them to abandon extremism upon assuming power. In his National Day address on August 15, 2014, Modi, less than two months after assuming office, condemned communal violence as "too long" and preventing the progress of the nation. He also called for a "ten-year moratorium" on all types of sectorial violence, which had muddled the public discourse.

The Hindutva community emphasized the religious and cultural aspects of Hindu society's sentiments. As a result, they acquired the legacy of the glory of Hindu civilization. From this position, they possess a compelling message that can resonate across the expanding media in India. Their objective is to restore India to its former grandeur, which existed during the British colonial rule over the Indian subcontinent.

## **5. INC and BJP Position in LS Elections**

In the context of India being a parliamentary federal democracy, the Lok Sabha general election determines the nation's legislators, policymakers, and, consequently, its policies. As a result of Indian voting patterns and approaches in the LS elections toward the INC as a secular, non-communal force, it has been the preferred party of the people for decades and has been elected to rule India. However, communal forces have attempted to seize power since the 1950s by organizing the BJS party. This process was then continued in the 1980s by the BJP, which is currently in power in India. From its inception, the BJP and its predecessor, the BJS, have consistently employed a dual-pronged approach. One approach relies on ethno-

religious mobilizations, as exemplified by the movement to construct a temple in Ayodhya (during which radical Hindus destroyed the Babri Mosque in 1992, which was not solely an assault on a mosque but rather "an assault on the collective self of Indian Muslims"); the other is a more moderate strategy that emphasizes coalition building and addresses socioeconomic and patriotic concerns. The initial approach is the most favored option. During a three-day "chintan baithak" (ideation storming session) held in Goa by the BJP in August 2004, RSS representative Madan Das Devi stated that the Sangh expected the BJP to maintain its stance on Hindutva and propagate RSS ideology (Adeney&Saez 2005, p. 250). According to Zavos (2005, p. 248), in contrast, when conditions prevented Hindu nationalist forces from employing their ethno-religious repertoire, the BJP recognized that a moderation-based strategy appeared indispensable for securing power, particularly in forming alliances. According to Zavos (2005, p. 260), however, the BJP attempted to be moderate, particularly during the Vajpayee administration; Hindutva extremists criticized this approach. After the 2004 elections, Praveen Togadia, general secretary of the VHP, stated: "The Bhartiya Janata Party betrayed the Hindus. The BJP left its core ideology of Hindutva and trust on the basis of which they had been voted to power. For votes they tied up with the jehadis" (Gupta, 2004, p. 300). However, certain National Democratic Alliance (NDA) partners, such as the Janata Dal in Bihar and the TDP in Andhra Pradesh, supported this coalition due to the moderate stances adopted by the BJP. The National Executive Committee of the JD issued a resolution to this effect immediately following the 2004 general election. The statement asserted:

We joined the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) only after the three controversial issues (construction of a Ram temple at



Ayodhya, Article 370 and Uniform Civil Code) had been removed from the agenda of the NDA. If any effort is now made to revive them, we shall have to take another road (Adeney & Saez 2005, p. 249).

Another BJP ally, the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), declared, "If the BJP chooses to adopt the communal agenda, we will sever ties with it" (Adeney & Saez 2005, p. 249). The subsequent graphs and charts detail the voting patterns of Indians concerning the BJP and its NDA allies. Table 1 shows parties' share of votes between 1991 and 2014.

**Table 1.** National and Regional Parties, 1991-2014 (in % of valid votes)

PARTIES	1991	1996	1998	1999	2004	2009	2014
INC	36.26	28.80	25.82	28.30	26.53	28.52	19.31%
BJP	20.11	20.29	25.59	23.75	22.16	18.84	30.00
TOTAL	56.37	49.09	51.41	52.05	48.59	47.36	49.31
REGIONAL PARTIES	43.63	50.71	48.59	47.95	51.41	52.54	51.29
GRAND TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: India, 2009

The Sangh Parivar is currently undergoing a period of organized operation and ambiguity regarding the position and standing of Hindutva in contemporary Indian politics. However, in the interim Indian policy, the Sangh Parivar is fundamentally demanding the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, an anti-converting policy, and a uniform civil code in law. These objectives were the campaign slogans of the BJP in multiple elections and the goal of "shaping Hindu society into a form that reflects the perceived glory of the Hindu 'race'" (Zavos, 2005, p. 37). The outcomes of Lok Sabha elections involving major Indian political actors over the

past three decades have demonstrated that instability and shifts in the power dynamic have, on multiple occasions, taken observers of the Indian political process by surprise. Due to this election, the INC, which had previously ruled India by itself on multiple occasions, was compelled to retreat from other parties and was obligated to form coalition-style governments. This practice has since become customary for INC and others. However, most of the time, the BJP and INC determined who would rule the central government of India.

Furthermore, the data indicates that Hindu nationalism has recently experienced a surge in popularity (Adeney & Saez 2005, p. 68). As a result, analysts hypothesize that "recent manifestations of Hindu nationalism—such as those that occurred between 1987 and 1993—were the result of various new claimants to political power becoming more assertive and Hindu nationalism's efforts to mobilize and consolidate the Hindu vote" (Rajagopal, 2001, p. 23). The BJP won 282 Lok Sabha seats in the 16<sup>th</sup> election, an increase from two seats in the seventh Lok Sabha election thirty-five years ago. (India, 2009). Table 2 shows Lok Sabha Election Outcomes for BJP and INC from 1980 to 2014.

**Table 2.** 7<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election Outcomes, for BJP and INC (1980-2014)

Lok Sabha Election duration	BJP Seats gaining	BJP&NDA Seats	Percentage of whole votes	INC Seats gaining	Percentage of whole votes	Note
7 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 1980	2	The BJS has two seats	-	353	42.69%	BJS changed to BJP with the same leaders
8 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 1984	4	No alliance	07.74%	415	49.01%	
9 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 1989	85	-	11.36%	197	39.50%	Opposition was INC

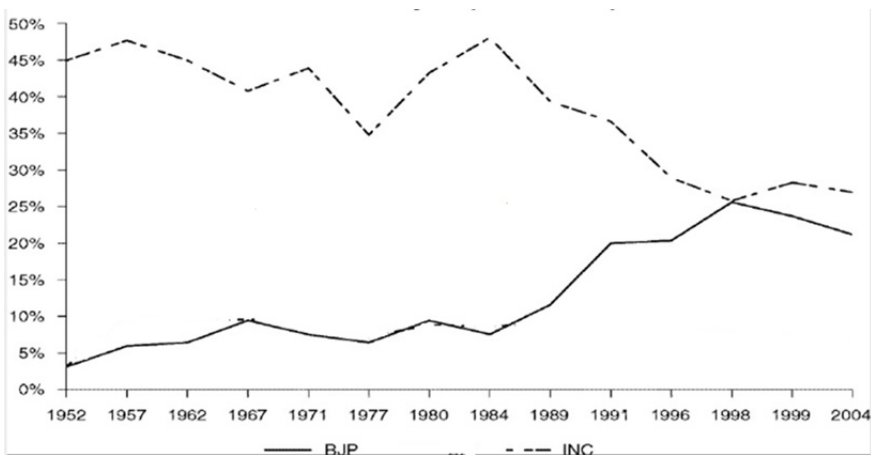
Lok Sabha Election duration	BJP Seats gaining	BJP&ND A Seats	Percentage of whole votes	INC Seats gaining	Percentage of whole votes	Note
10 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 1991	120	-	20.11%	232	36.50%	
11 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 1996	161	213	20.29%	140	29.70%	Opposition was INC
12 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 1998	182	254	25.59%	141	25.82%	Opposition was INC
13 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 1999	182	270	23.75%	114	28.30%	Opposition was INC
14 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 2004	138	181	22.16%	145	26.69%	Opposition was BJP
15 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 2009	116	159	18.80%	206	28.55%	Opposition was BJP
16 <sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha general election, 2014	282	334	31.00%	44	19.3%	No official opposition

Source: Data Gathered by Authors from India, 2009

This trend signifies strengthening their position on the battlefield of political parties in India. However, upon examining the voting patterns over the past three decades, the BJP's share rose from 7.74% in the 7<sup>th</sup> LS election to 31% in the 16<sup>th</sup> LS election (7.74% in the 8<sup>th</sup>, 11.36% in the 9<sup>th</sup>, 20.11% in the 10<sup>th</sup>, 20.29% in the 11<sup>th</sup>, 25.59% in the 12<sup>th</sup>, 23.75% in the 13<sup>th</sup>, 22.16% in the 14<sup>th</sup>, 18.80% in the 15<sup>th</sup>, and 31.00% in the 16<sup>th</sup>) (India, 2009). Consequently, the fluctuations in the BJP's voter bank do not correspond to the changes in its seat percentage. The highest performance was 31% and 282 seats in the 16<sup>th</sup> LS election, but the INC, the BJP's rival, surpassed that figure in the 8<sup>th</sup> 1984 LS election with 414 seats, representing nearly 50% of all voters. According to analysts, the election slogans that bolstered the BJP's

position in every election except for the ninth, tenth, and eleventh LS elections, which were influenced by the Hindutva forces' destruction of the Babri Mosque, asserted that the party had successfully channeled Hindu sentiment to seize power. In all other elections, the slogan "better life" for Indians served as the foundational BJP campaign message. Even in certain elections, Hindutva factors were deemed decisive in the BJP's defeat (in the 2009 election, for instance, Mr. Modi was a key player, but he was deemed a factor in the party's defeat). When it was stated in 2004 that the BJP had lost in part due to Modi's mismanagement of the Gujarat riots (Adeney & Saez 2005, p. 249), the BJP realized that it needed to distance itself from the Hindutva hardliner ship in order to find a foundation for a government. Additionally, the Sangh Parivar is aware that a return to radical Hindu nationalist politics by the BJP would alienate its allies and delay the party's return to power (Adeney & Saez 2005, p. 250). Figure 3 shows Lok Sabha Election Outcomes, for BJP and INC from 1952 to 2004.

**Figure 3.** Graph of 7<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha Election Outcomes, for BJP and INC



Source: Politics of India, 2009

## 6. Discussion

Globalization facilitates extensive "integration" (internally and externally) among nations; consequently, the BJP's trend away from Hindu political radicalism is also considered as moderation. The BJP is distancing itself openly and publicly from its previous communal slogans. While Indian Muslims did endure Gujarat communal riots in 2002, which were executed by Hindutva forces, these incidents, perpetrated by Hindu extremists against the Muslim community, suggest that the possibility of similar massacres reoccurring remains. Furthermore, such incidents have the potential to be replicated in varying degrees of magnitude. In actuality, while the number of fatalities in Gujarat was approximately equivalent to that of the "Babri Mosque" communal riots, the protests did not cover as large a geographical area. This demonstrates that Hindus did not retaliate against Indian Muslims in the same manner as they did in the "Babri Mosque" case. Christian minority groups were also present during the "Orissa communal riots" that occurred in 2008.

However, as a result of the waves of globalization, Indians are not showing distancing from the BJP, and the BJP has not only maintained its political foundation, but has also strengthened its position. In the 2000s and 2010s, the BJP shifted its election slogans from communal concerns, such as the construction of the "Ram temple" on the site of the destroyed Babri Mosque in the 1980s and 1990s, to "anti-corruption", "good governance", and "a better economic situation" for India. Furthermore, the BJP's internal operations demonstrate the prevalence of "moderate Hindutva discourse" and the influence of factions that manipulate extremist figures such as "N. Modi" to portray them as an economic hero rather than an RSS "organizer", or "communal extremist rioter".

Consequently, it can be asserted that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been broadening its support base in India over the past two decades by averting communal slogans. Moreover, as a result of globalization, the political radicalism of the BJP towards Hinduism is veering towards moderation, as evidenced by the party's shifting electoral slogans and leaders' post-election strategies. Furthermore, as a consequence of the effects of globalization, individuals continue to associate themselves with radical Hindu parties such as the BJP, which endeavors to demonstrate its efficacy in addressing the shortcomings of the INC government by regulating inflation and corruption.

As a significant entity in the globalized, shrinking world, India is confronted with the dual challenges of radicalism and the globalization trend. In addition to being founded upon injustice and inequality (whether global or local), radicalism is a response to cultural affronts committed against ancient, civilized cultures in the last few centuries. Such cultures instilled a sense of defenselessness that compelled them to employ any means necessary to defend themselves. In this regard, radicalism may be regarded as a radical reaction and response. Hinduism has, at minimum, been confronted with two significant cultural influences over the past few centuries: "Islam" and "the West", in addition to the British colonial occupation of its territories.

Following this, nationalism and the freedom movement emerged in India; they gained momentum in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and achieved victory over the British occupation by the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. By securing India's independence and implementing a new Indian constitution, the nationalist movement produced results. However, nationalism persisted and shifted its focus from "colonials" to "Indian Minorities", particularly Muslims, who have

struggled to preserve their identity in independent India. Hindu nationalism capitalized on this by defining a new "other" and uniting against it in order to strengthen and unify itself. Minority groups (Muslims, Christians, etc.) have since been targeted by "Radical National Hinduism" under the "Hindutva" doctrine, which is led by the Sangh Parivar, with particular emphasis on the RSS goal that seeks to "saffronise" Hindu nationalism.

As a result, Hindu radicalism has widespread opposition to the rights and status of minorities to the extent that minority communities have experienced a period of institutionalized discrimination, self-hatred, low self-esteem, low self-confidence, insecurity, and socioeconomic, political, and educational regression. Radical Hinduism possesses the capacity and potential to endanger secular Hindu communities that are diverse, in addition to communities in India and around the world. Hindutva forces are currently conducting anti-minority communal operations in India, which can be viewed as preparation for future endeavors against other majorities around the globe. Hence, certain academics, such as Carrier (Carrier, 2012, p. 1) caution that the world should be prepared to confront Hinduism, that when Hindu nationalism is ascending, not waning, as one of the "world threats," radicalism also has a branch among Indian Hindus, which is expanding and consolidating its influence through the utilization of globalization's capabilities. This poses a threat to the pluralistic, secular, nonviolent democracy of India, the non-radical Hindu faith, and ultimately global peace. Figure 4 shows Narendra Modi, pamphlet in hand, looking at the Greater India (Akhand Bharat) map, including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka with symbolic Saffron color.

**Figure 4.** Greater India (Akhand Bharat)



Source: Hinduexistence, n.d.

They are following "Hindu race hegemony" within India by founding the Hindu Nation of Rashtra. In this regard, RSS employees, functioning as frontline agents, endeavor to galvanize the sentiments of the general Hindu populace in support of their objectives. By mobilizing its followers, 'the others' are defined and constructed in accordance with their needs. The organization then uses this collective sentiment among the Hindu masses to further its objectives and employs them in its service. Minorities (particularly Muslims) have been subjected to significant persecution as a consequence of the Hindutva forces' exclusion policy, which has led to the marginalization of Indian minorities in their native land.



Hindu nationalist extremists are attempting to restrict and control "the others." Thus, communal operations against Indian minorities commenced during the partition and have intensified, particularly over the past three decades. Despite the substantial population of Indian minorities, Hindutva has identified India as one of its primary targets. However, they have encountered a political and cultural barrier in the form of "moderate Hinduism," which has been politically led by the INC and other secular forces.

With its popular strategy, INC has ruled India for a considerable time since independence. Hindutva, employing communalism as a double-edged sword, intends to destabilize INC as a political rival and minority groups as designated "others". To gain political power in the federal, parliamentary, and state/central levels of Indian democracy, they have incited communal unrest against minority groups, mobilized "Hindu sentiment" against moderate forces that adhere to an interaction policy toward minorities, and influenced the national sentiment of the Hindu people to vote in favor of saffron forces. Presently, the majority of political Hinduism-based movements are spiritually (directly or indirectly) led and affiliated with the Brahmanical traditional leading of RSS in general and other main Sangh groups. The 'Saffron Wave' is a prominent Hindu nationalist movement that emerged in the late 1980s as a logical consequence of decades of systematic, meticulously organized, and ideological expansion by the Sangh Parivar (Hansen, 1999, p. 134). Irrespective of the BJP's performance in securing power, its vote share has increased steadily over the past three decades. In the 2014 LS elections, the BJP secured the support of over thirty percent of all eligible voters, an increase from its initial share of around eight to nine percent. Therefore, notwithstanding the voters' intentions to support the BJP, the party successfully attracted Indian voters.

However, the BJP, functioning as the political faction of the Hindutva forces, emphasizes attaining power rather than adhering to radical Hindu agendas. Consequently, once in power, they adopted a more moderate stance, albeit a tactical one. As an illustration, Mr. Modi, the most radical member of the BJP, began to present himself as a moderate "business friendly" and "development" icon rather than a "Hindu nationalist icon," as he aspired to appear more moderate rather than radical. This observation unequivocally demonstrates the impact of globalization, which fosters "integration" among individuals (internally and externally).

As a result, communal factors are occasionally perceived as impediments to achieving political objectives. As an illustration, the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election was devoid of communal elements, except for the 'Modi' factor, which is widely recognized as an emblematic figure of Hindu extremist communal groups responsible for a significant communal operation in Gujarat in 2002, resulting in the loss of thousands of Muslim lives. However, he was perceived more as an advocate for industrial expansion and economic growth than a communal icon on this election battlefield. The BJP propaganda machine attempted to portray him as an economic rescuer and hero, rather than a figurehead for constructing the Ram Temple in Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh. This transformed him from a communal icon. Therefore, the Saffron groups can utilize their members' capabilities in response to the circumstances' requirements and necessities.

The Sangh's exploitation of Indian religious sentiments for political gain has led to a negative consequence: Hinduism, which has historically been perceived as a tolerant and accepting faith that embraces diverse perspectives, will no longer be regarded as such.

This lack of tolerance by "Hindutva" will undermine the harmonious coexistence of a diverse Indian community.

As evidenced by the outcomes of the Lok Sabha elections of major Indian political parties over the past three decades, 'Hindu Nationalism' has experienced a surge in popularity over the past few years. The BJP's achievements over the past three decades demonstrate the success of its efforts to increase the number of parliamentary seats from two in the seventh Lok Sabha election to 282 (out of 543) in the sixteenth Lok Sabha election. This trend indicates an improvement in the party's standing on the political battlefield in India.

As a result of Hindutva forces exploiting religion for political gain, which is a highly contingent relationship between religion and politics, religion has had a significantly greater impact on politics in recent decades than it did in the early years following independence. The secular (non-religious) INC, which dominated India for more than four decades following the country's independence, has been the country's principal ruling party. Except for the BJP-led coalition government in Delhi for six years, no political party or coalition of parties has ever governed India using explicit religious appeals. However, religious and identity politics significantly influence India's public sphere (Sica, 2012, p. 136).

Therefore, while it is true that a secular state was established in India notwithstanding the mass killings and forced migration of millions of individuals based on religion, and that it has persevered in an ongoing global context where ethnic nationalism continues to dominate (Sica, 2012, p. 137), India's secular, pluralistic governance system, which emerged after its independence, has encountered similar challenges. However, it possesses more

advanced capabilities and practices compared to certain neighboring countries. At the same time, the post-independence political process in India has not effectively protected its extraordinary pluralism. Discrimination against minority groups has been prevalent, with organized attacks on their lives and property in the name of Hindutva. This creates an insecure society for minorities and their future. The principle of religious freedom encompasses all facets of faith, including rituals and beliefs and the right to religious thought. It also ensures protection against discrimination based on religion, race, caste, place of birth, or gender.

India has emerged as a nation characterized by an increasing religious sentiment, and its citizens are undeniably devout individuals who adhere to their religious beliefs. Therefore, their emphasis will be more pronounced on their culture and religion; thus, the Hindu nationalists managed to achieve success by capitalizing on historical reserves of religious nationalism that have historically been fundamental to the majority of Indian nationalist movements (Hansen, 1999, p. 74). India does not experience a single year without communal unrest, whether minor or major, occurring in some regions of the nation. When Hindutva cannot ascertain a cause, they revisit historical events to discover the "truth" and advocate for it.

## 7. Conclusion

Globalization facilitates extensive "integration" among nations. The BJP's trend away from Hindu political radicalism is also a moderation and distancing itself openly and publicly from its previous communal slogans. Indians are not showing distancing

from the BJP, and the BJP has not only maintained its political foundation, but has also strengthened its position. In the 2000s and 2010s, the BJP shifted its election slogans from communal concerns to "moderate Hindutva discourse". It can be asserted that the BJP has been broadening its support base in India over the past two decades by averting communal slogans.

The nationalism and the freedom movement shift its focus from "colonials" to "Indian Minorities," the RSS goal that seeks to "saffronise" Hindu nationalism. As a result, Hindu radicalism poses a threat to the pluralistic, secular, nonviolent democracy of India, the non-radical Hindu faith, and ultimately global peace. They are following "Hindu race hegemony" within India by founding the Hindu Nation of Rashtra. Hindu nationalist extremists are attempting to restrict and control "the others." They have encountered a political and cultural barrier in the form of "moderate Hinduism," which has been politically led by the INC and other secular forces. Hindutva, employing communalism as a double-edged sword, intends to destabilize INC as a political rival and minority groups as designated "others." To gain political power, the party successfully attracted Indian voters. The BJP, functioning as the political faction of the Hindutva forces, emphasizes attaining power rather than adhering to radical Hindu agendas. As a result, communal factors are occasionally perceived as impediments to achieving political objectives, the Saffron groups can utilize their members' capabilities in response to the circumstances' requirements and necessities.

The Sangh's exploitation of Indian religious sentiments for political gain has led to a negative consequence: Hinduism, which has historically been perceived as a tolerant and accepting faith that embraces diverse perspectives, will no longer be regarded as such.

'Hindu Nationalism' has experienced a surge in popularity over the past few years. The BJP's achievements over the past three decades demonstrate the success of its efforts to increase the number of parliamentary seats from two in the 7<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election to 282 (out of 543) in the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election. This trend indicates an improvement in the party's standing on the political battlefield in India.

As a result of Hindutva forces exploiting religion for political gain, which is a highly contingent relationship between religion and politics, religion has had a significantly greater impact on politics in recent decades than it did in the early years following independence. The post-independence political process in India has not effectively protected its extraordinary pluralism. Discrimination against minority groups has been prevalent, with organized attacks on their lives and property in the name of Hindutva. This creates an insecure society for minorities and their future. The principle of religious freedom encompasses all facets of faith, including rituals and beliefs and the right to religious thought. It also ensures protection against discrimination based on religion, race, caste, place of birth, or gender.

India has emerged as a nation characterized by an increasing religious sentiment, their emphasis will be more pronounced on their culture and religion; thus, the Hindu nationalists managed to achieve success by capitalizing on historical reserves of religious nationalism that have historically been fundamental to the majority of Indian nationalist movements. India does not experience a single year without communal unrest, whether minor or major, occurring in some regions of the nation. When Hindutva cannot ascertain a cause, they revisit historical events to discover the "truth" and advocate for it.

There are significant disparities in the levels of education and literacy among Muslims across different regions of the country. The state of affairs concerning Christians in India is similar to that of Muslims. Furthermore, it is often challenging to ascertain objectively which side initiates the riots; in such cases, the Muslims (representing the minority group) are disproportionately affected in terms of loss of life and damage to property. The BJP and Sangh Parivar have come to the understanding that their approach and objectives run counter to the democratic and secular values of India, which are characterized by diversity, pluralism, and non-violence; however, they persist in doing as they please, oblivious to the Hindu faith, humanism, and secular democracy that are fundamental to the country's values. In contrast, the Indian Muslim minority is subjected to ceaseless and occasionally unexpected assaults at the hands of communal forces.

On the contrary, despite the extensive presence of various media formats in India, the open policy implemented by Indian policymakers in the early 1990s has led to stronger relations between India and the rest of the world. Over the past few decades, India has been profoundly impacted by globalization. Furthermore, as a consequence of this, certain adverse cultural aspects of Hinduism, including the caste system, polygamy, sati, etc., which were inconsistent with human values, have vanished or been diminished. However, this has not been sufficient to halt the ongoing communal process that targets the lives, properties, and social standing of minorities in the Indian community. Discrimination continues against these groups, which worsens their lives and circumstances. This demonstrates the dark side of radical Hinduism's dominance over the Indian society and further undermines the security of minority members in every corner of the

country. Furthermore, the Indian government's treatment of radical Hindu forces in elections makes the future of Indian minorities also uncertain and precarious.

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