

**BTTN Journal**

p-ISSN 2958-1214

e-ISSN 2958-1222



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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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**Narendra Modi's Hindutva Policy: A Detailed Examination of Its Implications on Indo-Pak Diplomatic and Strategic Relations**

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<i>Article Info</i>	<i>Abstract</i>
<p><b>Article History:</b></p> <p><i>Received:</i> March 21, 2023</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> May 11, 2023</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> June 10, 2023</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Diplomatic Relations, Islamophobia, Political Ideology, Security Dynamics, Hindutva Policy</p>	<p><i>Concurrently with the rise of ultra-nationalism globally, India is undergoing a fundamental change driven by the adoption of the exclusivist Hindutva ideology. Since PM Narendra Modi assumed power in 2014, the Hindutva ideology has gained widespread acceptance and popularity, permeating all segments of Indian society and institutions, including foreign relations and cultural events. This paper examines the Hindutva ideology as a policy and its significant impact on India-Pakistan relations. The Hindutva ideology, fueled by the patronage of the government, has exacerbated the already strained relations between the two countries. It has influenced key aspects such as the abrogation of special status in Jammu and Kashmir, alleged interference in Balochistan, engagement in the Chabahar port, and the hindrance of confidence-building measures. By analyzing the Hindutva policy and its implications, this paper sheds light on the broader consequences for India-Pakistan relations, emphasizing the need for constructive dialogue, de-escalation, and regional cooperation to foster a more peaceful and cooperative future.</i></p>

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## Introduction

South Asia is a region of considerable global significance, underpinned by complex political dynamics. These dynamics are influenced by an intricate blend of socio-political, religious, and ideological factors characterizing the region's unique socio-political landscape. Central to this situation is the relationship between India and Pakistan - two nuclear-armed neighbours with a convoluted shared history and enduring rivalry. This relationship forms a focal point of South Asian politics, significantly influencing regional stability, strategic alliances, and geopolitical power plays. One significant development influencing this relationship is the ascent of the BJP under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in India, and the corresponding promotion of the Hindutva policy.<sup>1</sup>

Hindutva, or "Hinduness," is an ideological paradigm that champions the dominance of Hindus, Hindu values, and the Hindu way of life in India. Promulgated extensively by Modi's administration, this ideology has far-reaching implications on both the domestic environment and the geopolitical interactions of India, including its relationship with Pakistan. Thus, understanding this ideological shift and its implications is paramount to discerning the complex web of Indo-Pak relations and broader regional politics.<sup>2</sup>

This research article is centered around two primary questions aimed at unpacking the nuances of Modi's Hindutva policy and understanding its broader impacts, particularly on Indo-Pak relations. First, "What are the key elements of Modi's Hindutva policy integrated into India's domestic policies?" - dissects the ideological foundations of Modi's Hindutva policy. The research closely examines the salient features of this policy, exploring how they interweave into the fabric of India's domestic policy discourse. This exploration sheds light on the policy's underlying principles, objectives, strategies, and implementation mechanisms, offering a comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> Inayat Kalim, Syed Hussain Shaheed Soherwordi, and Areeja Syed, "Hindutva in India: Rise of Bigotry against Muslims," *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 35 (December 2020), 327 – 340.

<sup>2</sup> Azeem Ibrahim, "Modi's Slide Toward Autocracy," *Foreign Policy*, July 13 (2020), <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/07/13/modi-india-hindutva-hindu-nationalism-autocracy/>.

understanding of how Modi's Hindutva policy shapes India's political and diplomatic narrative.

Second, "How has the Hindutva policy specifically influenced diplomatic and strategic relations between India and Pakistan?" - delves into the tangible impact of Modi's Hindutva policy on Indo-Pak relations. The research scrutinizes specific instances of diplomatic exchanges, policy decisions, and conflicts between the two nations within the framework of the Hindutva policy. This includes examining of the significant events and initiatives under Modi's leadership and evaluating their implications on India's relationship with Pakistan. The exploration allows us to understand the Hindutva policy's role in shaping India's strategic approach towards Pakistan and the resulting shifts in their diplomatic engagement.

To approach these research questions, a qualitative and analytical methodology is adopted. This methodology allows for a thorough and nuanced understanding of the topic, giving room for context, complexity, and interpretation that is essential when exploring policy implications and diplomatic relations. In terms of data collection, a multi-faceted approach is used. Primary sources are drawn from direct observation, official statements, government policies, and speeches by Narendra Modi and his administration. These sources provide first-hand insight into the policy's formulation and implementation, allowing us to explore how the Hindutva ideology is directly expressed and applied by the Indian government.

Secondary sources are crucial in supplementing this analysis, providing interpretations, commentary, and background context. These are carefully selected from high-quality, recognized resources to ensure reliability and validity. They include scholarly articles from HEC-recognized and international journals, authoritative books, and expert reports. The use of such diverse sources adds depth and breadth to the research, enriching the understanding of the policy's impacts on Indo-Pak relations.

### **Understanding the Hindutva Policy**

The Hindutva policy, a central ideological tenet of the BJP under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, represents a significant shift in India's socio-political landscape. A thorough examination of primary and secondary sources is crucial to comprehensively understand this policy, its origins, principles, and implications. This section aims to provide an

insightful understanding of the Hindutva policy through a comprehensive analysis of the ideological foundations, its historical context, and the contemporary interpretations and implications.<sup>3</sup>

The Hindutva ideology, rooted in the early 20th century, emerged as a response to India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule. Hindutva, meaning "Hinduness," seeks to establish the primacy of Hindu culture, values, and identity in India.<sup>4</sup> Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, who argued for a unified Hindu nation, was the driving force behind this ideology. Hindutva emphasizes the cultural and historical unity of Hindus and advocates for preserving Hindu interests in India's social, political, and legal realms.

The BJP's adoption of the Hindutva policy and its rise to power under Modi's leadership brought the ideology into the mainstream of Indian politics. The party's commitment to Hindutva is evident in its manifesto and policy pronouncements, which prioritize the promotion of Hindu values and traditions. The implementation of the Hindutva policy is visible in various aspects of Indian governance, such as educational reforms, cultural institutions, and laws related to citizenship and religious conversion.<sup>5</sup>

The Hindutva policy's influence extends beyond domestic affairs and shapes India's foreign policy and diplomatic engagements. While India has traditionally adhered to a non-aligned stance, the Hindutva ideology introduces a new dynamic to its interactions with other countries, particularly those with Muslim-majority populations. The policy fosters a sense of Hindu nationalism, indirectly affecting India's international standing among nations concerned about Islamic extremism. Consequently, the Hindutva policy has implications for India's regional relationships, including those with Pakistan, a Muslim-majority neighbour with a historically complex relationship.

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<sup>3</sup> Heewon Kim, "Understanding Modi and Minorities: The BJP-led NDA Government in India and Religious Minorities," *India Review*, Vol. 16. No. 4 (2017), 357-376.

<sup>4</sup> Christophe Jaffrelot, *The Hindu Nationalist Movement, and Indian Politics: 1925 to the 1990s: Strategies of Identity-building, Implantation and Mobilization with Special Reference to Central India*, (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> Chetan Bhatt, *Hindu Nationalism: Origins, Ideologies and Modern Myths*, (Routledge, 2020).

The Hindutva policy has significantly impacted Indo-Pak relations, characterized by a history of conflicts and tensions. The policy's promotion of Hindu nationalism and emphasis on a distinctly Hindu identity have further complicated this relationship. Contentious issues such as the status of Jammu and Kashmir and the treatment of Muslims in India have strained bilateral ties further. The revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and changes in citizenship laws have triggered concerns in Pakistan, perceiving these actions as challenges to the rights of Muslims in India. These policy decisions and the underlying Hindutva ideology have further hindered efforts to find common ground and promote dialogue between the two nations. Thus, the Hindutva policy is a defining feature of the BJP's political agenda under Modi's leadership. It seeks to establish Hindu cultural dominance in India and manifests in various aspects of domestic and foreign policies. The policy's implications extend to India's regional relationships, including Indo-Pak relations. Understanding the Hindutva policy necessitates a comprehensive analysis of its ideological underpinnings, historical context, and contemporary interpretations, shedding light on its profound implications for Indian society and regional dynamics.

### **Hindutva Policy in India's Domestic Policies**

When the BJP gained power in 2014, it approved many laws which have provided legal cover to the indiscriminate actions of extremist elements against the people of other faiths in the country. It has successfully promoted Hindu nationalism and has turned into a violent ideology. According to the Director of South Asia's Human Rights Watch, Meenakshi Ganguly, BJP has been encouraging extremist Hindus in every institution of the country and harming the minorities without any regard for ethics and laws. He further said that the extremist elements are committing such acts of prejudice with the support of the government. Many minorities and especially Muslims are becoming the victims of such intolerant acts. When the Indian government passed new farm laws in November 2020, the farmers belonging to different religions started to protest it. The leadership, supporters of the BJP, and media started a vicious blame game against the Sikhs and said that the real purpose of these protests was the creation of Khalistan as the Sikhs had been involved in a separatist movement during the 1970s and 1980s in the Indian province of Punjab. Similarly, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi used the word "parasites" for the peaceful protestors while addressing the Parliament on

February 8, 2021.<sup>6</sup> He even named the coverage of events happening in India by the International Media a “foreign destructive ideology”. There were some other controversial and discriminating laws that were passed by the Modi government, such as the citizenship law in December 2019. This law was entirely against the Muslims as under the law, religion was the basis of citizenship making almost all Muslims lose their citizenship. Before that in August 2019, the Indian government annulled articles 270 and 34A and ended the constitutional autonomy which was given to the Jammu and Kashmir State, a Muslim majority area. Afterward, a series of restrictions were imposed, and the basic human rights of the people were denied.<sup>7</sup>

Many Rohingya Muslim refugees have taken refuge in India; however, the Indian government had been stating its intentions clearly since October 2018 regarding sending these Muslim refugees back to Myanmar without paying any attention to the fact that their lives would never be safe in Myanmar. Despite that fact, more than a dozen refugees have been sent back to Myanmar. Moreover, in their hate for Muslims, legal action is taken against the Muslim cattle traders under the laws against cow slaughter by the Indian states. To make matters worse, Muslims and Dalits are often attacked by BJP-affiliated groups just on suspicion of buying, selling, or slaughtering cows. These actions show the level of intolerance in India.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, a mob in saffron scarves attacked a Muslim girl Muskan Khan in Hijab while she was entering her college in Mandya. During an interview with the NDTV News Channel, she said that she went to the college for the submission of her assignment, however, upon reaching, the mob was not letting her go inside the college as she was in Hijab/Burqa but she managed to get inside. The mob was also chanting the slogan of “Jai Shri Ram” which means Hail Lord Ram. Therefore, in a response, Muskan Khan started to chant “Allah hu Akbar” which means “Allah is great”. She

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<sup>6</sup> Deccan Herald, “PM Modi's Parasite Reference has Deeply Hurt Farmers: Union Leaders,” *Deccan Herald*, February 14 (2021), <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/pm-modis-parasite-reference-has-deeply-hurt-farmers-union-leaders-951014.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Adnan Abidi, “India: Government Policies, Actions Target Minorities,” *Human Rights Watch News*, February 19 (2021), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/19/india-government-policies-actions-target-minorities>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

expressed her commitment to continue her struggle for Hijab.<sup>9</sup> It can be stated that the people in Indian society are not only becoming intolerant, but the state institutions are also committing acts of prejudice. A High Court in the Indian state of Karnataka has also prohibited Muslim women from wearing hijab through a court decision. As a result of which, Hindu supremacist groups are calling to impose more restrictions on the hijab of Muslim girls, especially in classrooms.

### **Impact on Indo-Pak Diplomatic and Strategic Relations**

The Hindutva policy has significantly influenced the diplomatic and strategic relations between India and Pakistan. Hindutva, an ideology that seeks to promote Hindu nationalism, has shaped India's domestic politics, and consequently affected its approach towards Pakistan. The rise of Hindutva has resulted in a more assertive and nationalist stance by the Indian government, which has had implications for bilateral relations with Pakistan. Under the Hindutva policy, there has been an emphasis on reinforcing India's Hindu identity, which has sometimes been perceived by Pakistan as exclusionary and discriminatory towards its Muslim population. This perception has further strained the already fragile relations between the two countries.

The Hindutva ideology has also fueled an increase in religious tensions within India, often resulting in communal violence, which has had a negative impact on the perception of India in Pakistan.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the paradoxical approach towards freedom of speech has added to the complexities. While the Constitution of India guarantees freedom of speech and expression, there have been instances where critics argue that this right has been selectively curtailed or suppressed in the name of preserving national unity or preventing religious offense. Such restrictions on freedom of expression have been a subject of contention and have negatively influenced the perception of India's commitment to democratic values and

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<sup>9</sup> Al-Jazeera, "Outrage after hijab-wearing woman heckled by Hindu mob in India." *Al-Jazeera*, February 02 (2022), <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/2/8/schools-ordered-shut-in-india-as-hijab-ban-protests-intensify>.

<sup>10</sup> Anum Babur and Shaheen Akhtar, "Hindutva and Islamophobia." *Strategic Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (2021), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.53532/ss.041.04.0041>.

human rights, both domestically and internationally.<sup>11</sup> These internal dynamics and the resulting erosion of trust have significantly affected the Indo-Pak relations during the period from 2014 to the present. The strained bilateral ties, fueled by religious polarization and perceived discrimination, have made it increasingly difficult to establish meaningful dialogue and cooperation between the two nations. The scenarios mentioned below show some of the significant aftermaths of Hindutva policies and their impact on Indo-Pak diplomatic and strategic relations.

### **Abrogation of Articles 370 and 35 (A)**

The abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A by the Narendra Modi government in August 2019 has had significant implications for the Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir state. Articles 370 and 35A were laws that granted a special status to the region, providing it with certain powers and privileges. Article 35A, in particular, was added to the Indian Constitution in 1954 and granted the legislature of Jammu and Kashmir the authority to define the state's permanent residents and confer specific rights and privileges upon them, such as property ownership, voting rights, employment opportunities, and access to healthcare and education.<sup>12</sup>

However, the Modi government's actions have effectively revoked these rights and privileges from the residents of Kashmir, irrespective of their permanent residency status. This move has been criticized as undemocratic and against the will of the peaceful people of the region, leading to increased intolerance within the country. The abrogation of these articles demonstrates a disregard for the potential consequences of such actions and undermines the democratic principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution.<sup>13</sup> It is important to note that Kashmir has long been a disputed territory between India and Pakistan, both of which possess nuclear weapons. Any misstep or miscalculation in this sensitive region can potentially escalate into a

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<sup>11</sup> Gita Sahgal, "Hindutva Past and Present: From Secular Democracy to Hindu Rashtra," *Feminist Dissent* (2020), 19-49, <https://doi.org/10.31273/fd.n5.2020.757>.

<sup>12</sup> A Kapur Chatterjee, Kapur, "A Post-Mortem of Article 370: Constitutional Interpretation and Public Narratives in India," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2020), 267-289.

<sup>13</sup> Swapna Gopinath, "Historicizing Hindutva Ideology: From Ancient and Contemporary Times," *Cultural Politics*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (2022), 484-486.

dangerous conflict.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, it is crucial for the international community to understand the severe human rights violations in Kashmir and the plight of the Kashmiri people. The global community, particularly influential actors like China and the United States, must actively respond and take appropriate action against India's aggressive moves to address the ongoing crisis.<sup>15</sup>

The abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A was preceded by a presidential order issued by India on 5th August 2019, followed by the passing of the Indian-occupied Kashmir's recognition bill in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of parliament. Subsequently, the Indian military swiftly deployed troops in the region, and cellular networks were restricted.<sup>16</sup> In response to India's unilateral actions, Pakistan voiced its concerns and called upon the international community, specifically China and the United States, to react and take necessary measures against India's aggressive maneuvers.<sup>17</sup>

### **India's Interference in Balochistan**

An in-depth analysis of India's interference in Balochistan through Afghanistan reveals a complex and contentious relationship between India and Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> There have been instances where Indian Army officers and analysts openly discuss plans to harm Pakistan, indicating a lack of sincerity in their approach towards their neighboring country. For instance, a former Indian Army officer claimed to be in contact with the Indian Intelligence Agency RAW and Baloch separatists in Pakistan, expressing support for the insurgents and their aim to create a "free Balochistan." Following this revelation on a live TV show, Pakistan's security forces came under repeated

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<sup>14</sup> Rakesh Shukla, "The Abrogation of Article 370: Legal, Political, and Constitutional Perspectives," *A Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 3 (2020), 377-397.

<sup>15</sup> Shibashis Chatterjee and Udayan Das, "Indian Foreign Policy as Public History: Globalist, Pragmatist and Hindutva Imaginations." *India Review*, Vol. 20, No. 5 (2021), 565-588.

<sup>16</sup> Riyaz Punjabi, "Kashmir imbroglio: The Socio-political Roots," *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (1995), 39-53.

<sup>17</sup> Ali, "State Power, the Discourse of Victimhood, and Human Rights Abuses in Indian Kashmir," *Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (2021), 473-491.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad Nadeem Ashraf, Sher Ali Kakar, Sikandar Azam Khan, and Ghulam Mustafa, "The Emergence of Hybrid Warfare and International Security Environment: A Case Study of Pakistan," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.4, No. 4 (2021), 878-892, <https://doi.org/10.52337/pjia.v4i3.316>.

attacks in Balochistan, carried out by insurgents associated with groups like the Baloch Raji Ajoji Sangar (BRAS).<sup>19</sup>

The support extended to Baloch separatists by India has also been reported in various Indian newspapers. The Hindu, for instance, claimed that commanders of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) received medical treatment in Indian hospitals, facilitated by the Indian government and intelligence agencies. There have been allegations that Indian intelligence agencies provided financial support and safe havens for Baloch militants, as well as prominent Baloch separatist leaders like Brahamdagh Bugti. The Indian media has also been accused of disseminating false information about political, economic, and human rights issues in Balochistan to propagate a narrative that portrays Pakistan as incapable of addressing the situation.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the arrest and confession of Kulbhushan Yadav, an Indian Intelligence Officer and ex-commando of the Indian Navy, shed light on India's alleged involvement in supporting terrorist activities in Pakistan, including Balochistan. Yadav confessed to his role in executing terrorist plans and acknowledged the active support of RAW in these activities. He revealed that India has established multiple consulates near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, which serve as hubs for organizing and carrying out terrorist activities within Pakistan.<sup>21</sup>

Pakistan's foreign office, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), and media have made efforts to expose India's alleged involvement in terrorism, not only in Balochistan but also throughout Pakistan. These revelations have led to a growing international understanding of India's role in supporting insurgent movements and conducting destabilizing activities.<sup>22</sup> The alleged interference in Balochistan by India, as highlighted in the provided information, reflects the ramifications of the Hindutva policy. Hindutva's

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<sup>19</sup> F. K. Lodhi, "Balochistan Unveiled: An Analysis of Baloch Insurgency and Pakistan's Response," *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No.1 (2021), 189-206.

<sup>20</sup> A. Ahmad, "Understanding India's Proxy Warfare in Balochistan," *Policy Perspectives*, Vol.18, No.2 (2021), 176-187.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Saba, Ms Kokab, Noor Fatima, and Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, "India's Hybrid Warfare Strategy: Implications," *Journal of Xi'an Shiyou University, Natural Science Edition*, Vol. 19, No. 07, July (2023), <https://www.xisdjxsu.asia/V19I07-19.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup> Shah, & Zafar, "Balochistan and the Challenging Dynamics of Security," *Eurasian Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (2022), 173-188.

emphasis on Hindu nationalism has contributed to a more assertive and interventionist approach by the Indian government towards its neighboring countries. This policy has had implications for India's relations with Pakistan, with instances of alleged support to Baloch separatists being perceived as part of a broader strategy under Hindutva ideology. The complex dynamics between India, Pakistan, and Balochistan underscore the influence of domestic policies on regional geopolitics.

### **India's Revocation of MFN Status for Pakistan**

India's decision to revoke the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status for Pakistan, in the context of the Kashmir conflict, is intricately linked to the underlying Hindutva element. The revocation came following a cabinet meeting that discussed a deadly attack in the Indian Occupied Kashmir, where 44 paramilitary soldiers tragically lost their lives. This attack garnered extensive coverage in the Indian media, further fueling the nationalist sentiments associated with Hindutva ideology. Finance Minister Arun Jaitley, in addressing the media, declared the revocation of Pakistan's MFN status as part of a comprehensive strategy to diplomatically isolate the country. This decision aligns with the assertive and nationalist stance promoted under the Hindutva policy, which emphasizes Hindu nationalism and consolidating India's position against its perceived adversaries.<sup>23</sup>

In response to India's actions, Senator Sherry Rehman from the Pakistan People's Party highlighted the absence of evidence supporting India's claims and criticized the attempt to portray Pakistan as responsible for the attack in Kashmir. She stressed that such blame games only serve to perpetuate the cycle of conflict and undermine efforts to find a peaceful resolution. The underlying Hindutva element in India's approach to Pakistan contributes to the complex dynamics of the Kashmir conflict.<sup>24</sup> Hindutva's emphasis on Hindu nationalism and the promotion of a dominant Hindu identity shapes India's domestic politics and consequently influences its approach towards its neighbors, including Pakistan. The revocation of the

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<sup>23</sup> Rajesh Basrur, "Hindutva and Indian Foreign Policy," *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies*, March 30 (2023), <https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/idss/ip23033-hindutva-and-indias-foreign-policy/>.

<sup>24</sup> Singh, "India's Decision to Revoke the MFN Status for Pakistan: An Analysis," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 44, No. 6 (2020), 561-575.

MFN status is just one manifestation of the broader Hindutva-driven policies that shape India's stance on Kashmir and its relations with Pakistan.<sup>25</sup>

To de-escalate tensions and promote dialogue, it is imperative to address the underlying Hindutva element in India's policies. Confidence-building measures, inclusive approaches, and meaningful engagement are necessary to bridge the trust deficit and work towards a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute. International actors also have a crucial role to play in facilitating dialogue and promoting an environment conducive to peace and stability.<sup>26</sup>

In inference, the revocation of the MFN status for Pakistan must be understood within the context of India's Hindutva ideology. Hindutva's influence on India's approach towards Pakistan shapes its policies and drives nationalist sentiments, impacting the complex dynamics of the Kashmir conflict.<sup>27</sup> To achieve lasting peace, it is vital to address the underlying Hindutva element and promote inclusive dialogue that recognizes the aspirations and rights of all parties involved.

### **India's Engagement in Chabahar port**

India's engagement in the Chabahar port, particularly in response to China-Pakistan cooperation and the development of Gwadar port, can be seen as part of India's strategic response driven by the Hindutva ideology. This region of Asia has witnessed the emergence of the "New Great Game," which gained momentum after the Chabahar agreement between India and Iran. China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects have drawn the attention of various countries, including the United States, Russia, Pakistan, India, and Iran.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rehman, "The Ongoing Blame Game between India and Pakistan," *South Asian Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2019), 245-254.

<sup>26</sup> Joshi, "Terrorism and the Indo-Pak Relations: From Conflict Escalation to Peace Process," *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 75, No. 2 (2022), 191-208.

<sup>27</sup> S. Chaudhry & M. Tanveer, "Dynamics of India-Pakistan Relations in the Post-Balakot Scenario," *Journal of Political Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (2023), 85-100.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmad Bilal Khalil, "Pakistan and China: Don't Fear Chabahar Port," *The Diplomat*, (January 31, 2017), <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/pakistan-and-china-dont-fear-chabahar-port/>.

India's involvement in the Chabahar port, along with its efforts to counter China-Pakistan collaboration, can be understood within the context of the Hindutva-driven policy to safeguard its regional interests and ensure a balance of power. By strengthening its maritime navigation capabilities and countering the influence of Gwadar port, India aims to protect its strategic interests and challenge China's expanding presence in the region.<sup>29</sup>

To secure its own interests, Pakistan has sought to develop stronger relations with its friendly countries, such as China, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. These alliances provide Pakistan with the necessary support to counter India's moves and safeguard its economic and security interests. According to some Pakistani analysts, the Chabahar agreement between India and Iran is viewed as an attempt to isolate Pakistan in the region. On the other hand, Indian analysts argue that the Chabahar agreement responds to the Pakistan-China CPEC project, indicating a strategic rivalry between India and Pakistan.<sup>30</sup>

The complex dynamics of the "New Great Game" underscore the influence of the Hindutva policy in shaping India's regional engagement. India's efforts to counter China's BRI and CPEC projects and its strategic alliances reflect the Hindutva-driven pursuit of national interests and influence in the region. The competition for regional dominance and the establishment of strategic partnerships highlights the multidimensional nature of this game, with economic, political, and security factors at play.<sup>31</sup>

So, India's engagement in the Chabahar port and its strategic response to China-Pakistan cooperation can be understood within the context of the Hindutva ideology. Pursuing regional influence and protecting national interests drive India's actions in the "New Great Game." As the game dynamics evolve, Pakistan seeks to strengthen its alliances to counterbalance India's moves and safeguard its own economic and security interests. The interplay between Hindutva-driven policies, regional rivalries, and strategic partnerships shapes the ongoing dynamics of this complex game.

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<sup>29</sup> DAWN, "India withdraws Most Favoured Nation status for Pakistan", February 15 (2019), <https://www.dawn.com/news/1463999>.

<sup>30</sup> S. Solangi and Ali Hasan, "Development of Chabahar Port: Challenges and Implications for Pakistan and CPEC," *Electronic Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2019), 48-57.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 51.

## Hindutva Influence on Confidence-Building Measures

In the context of India and Pakistan relations, the Hindutva ideology has had implications for the effectiveness of confidence-building measures (CBMs) between the two countries. While military CBMs have faced challenges during periods of intense hostility and failed to prevent small-scale conflicts, non-military CBMs have the potential for long-term impact and have not been consistently pursued or sustained. This lack of continuity in non-military CBMs, such as trade and cultural exchanges, reflects the deep-seated distrust and enmity between India and Pakistan, highlighting the influence of Hindutva-driven policies.<sup>32</sup> One example of the breakdown in non-military CBMs was the halt in trade between India and Pakistan following the Pulwama terror attack. This incident exemplifies the level of mistrust and animosity between the two countries, resulting in the failure of CBMs to foster normalization of ties. Similarly, cultural CBMs, including the so-called "Cricket Diplomacy," have not been successful in practical terms. Since the Mumbai terrorist attacks in 2008, no cricket match has taken place between India and Pakistan directly either in Pakistan or India. While Pakistan made goodwill gestures, such as releasing an Indian national from prison before a cricket match, critics of sports diplomacy argue that such actions alone are insufficient to yield meaningful results.<sup>33</sup>

Despite their limitations, non-military CBMs, including academic and cultural exchanges, sports relations, and Track-II dialogues, can contribute to some level of normalcy, particularly in the media and public perception. Building understanding and trust between the two countries could potentially extend to defense-related matters, leading to a more conducive environment for peace. Although there may be challenges in the planning and execution of CBMs, their importance in fostering normalcy in bilateral relations and maintaining regional peace cannot be ignored.<sup>34</sup> The Hindutva ideology, with its nationalist and exclusionary tendencies, influences the dynamics of CBMs between India and Pakistan. The lack of sustained efforts

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<sup>32</sup> Mutahir Ahmed, "Confidence-building Measures between Pakistan and India: An Argument for Change," *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1998), 137–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584939808719835>.

<sup>33</sup> Muhammad W. Haider and Tahir M. Azad, "The Role of Confidence-Building Measures in the Evolution of Relations between Pakistan and India," *World Affairs*, Vol. 184, No. 3 (2021), 294–317.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* 300.

in non-military CBMs reflects the deep-rooted mistrust and hostility perpetuated by Hindutva-driven policies. To achieve meaningful progress, it is crucial to recognize the significance of CBMs and address the underlying Hindutva element in shaping India's approach to Pakistan. Only through consistent engagement, trust-building measures, and a genuine commitment to resolving conflicts can the two nations pave the way for a more peaceful and stable future.

## **Surgical Strikes**

India's pursuit of expansionist policies and its focus on military modernization can be seen as manifestations of the Hindutva ideology. The BJP through its promotion of political Hinduism, aligns with offensive realist policies that seek to establish India's dominance in the region. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, is quoted to have suggested that India's increasing militarism is a product of the Hindu nationalist mindset.<sup>35</sup> Throughout India's strategic evolution, Pakistan has remained a primary focus, serving as a reference point for India's military strategies. This focus intensified after the Sino-India War in 1962, as India sought to assert its regional power status. India has often used its rivalry with Pakistan as a justification for military modernization and upgrades, positioning itself as the dominant power in South Asia. The notion of becoming a superpower in the region has driven India's strategic thinking, with a belief that preparing for war is a responsible and prudent approach to statecraft.<sup>36</sup>

The concept of "Surgical Strikes" has emerged as a prominent feature in the Indo-Pak strategic equation, further influenced by the Hindutva ideology. The urge to establish India as a major power in the region has introduced the threat of surgical strikes, which are presented as strategic actions to counter perceived threats. This mindset reflects a belief that military assertiveness and offensive measures are necessary for India's regional dominance.<sup>37</sup> The Hindutva-driven focus on military modernization

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<sup>35</sup> Anum Babur and Shaheen Akhtar, "Hindutva and Islamophobia." *Strategic Studies* Vol. 41, No. 4 (2021), 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.53532/ss.041.04.0041>.

<sup>36</sup> Sana Taha, "Indian Surgical Strike: Implications and Response by Pakistan." *Islamabad Policy Research Institute*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (2020), 88–117, <https://doi.org/10.31945/iprij.200204>.

<sup>37</sup> Salma Malik, "Indian surgical strike: implications and response by Pakistan," *IPRI*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2020), 72-104, <https://doi.org/10.31945/iprij.200104>.

and the pursuit of power projection in the region carry implications for regional security and stability. The perception of preparing for war as responsible statecraft raises concerns about the potential escalation of tensions and the erosion of diplomatic avenues for resolving conflicts. It is crucial to recognize the role of Hindutva in shaping India's strategic thinking and to encourage a more balanced and cooperative approach to regional security.<sup>38</sup>

While India's pursuit of power and military modernization is driven by Hindutva ideology, it is essential to emphasize the importance of dialogue, diplomacy, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Constructive engagement, trust-building measures, and a commitment to peaceful coexistence are vital in promoting regional stability and harmony. By building mutual understanding and addressing underlying tensions, India and Pakistan can work towards a more peaceful and prosperous South Asia.<sup>39</sup> So, India's pursuit of expansionist policies and military modernization reflects the influence of the Hindutva ideology. The BJP's promotion of political Hinduism aligns with offensive realist policies, driving India's focus on regional dominance.<sup>40</sup> The emphasis on Pakistan as a strategic reference point, the concept of surgical strikes, and the belief in military assertiveness as responsible statecraft highlight the implications of Hindutva on India's strategic thinking. Promoting dialogue, diplomacy, and conflict resolution mechanisms are crucial for fostering peace and stability in the region, transcending the Hindutva-driven pursuit of power.

### **Neo-Classical Realism and the Impact of Hindutva on Indo-Pak Relations**

Neo-classical realism, a theory that combines elements of classical and neo-realism, offers analytical insights into the dynamics of Indo-Pak relations, particularly in the context of the Hindutva ideology. This theory considers systemic, cognitive, and domestic variables to understand a state's foreign policy decisions. By examining factors such as power distribution, threats,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid. 101.

<sup>39</sup> Malik, "Indian surgical strike: implications and response by Pakistan," 90.

<sup>40</sup> Aman Nair and Arindrajit Basu, "Confidence-Building Measures and Norm Diffusion in South Asia," *Observer Research Foundation*, February (2021), <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1805010/confidence-building-measures-and-norm-diffusion-in-south-asia/2537085/>.

perceptions, and the idiosyncratic behavior of leaders, neo-classical realism sheds light on the influence of Hindutva on India's approach to Pakistan.<sup>41</sup>

Neo-classical realism emphasizes the importance of both systemic and domestic variables in shaping a state's foreign policy. In the case of India, the influence of Hindutva, a domestic policy promoting Hindu nationalism, has had a significant impact on India's interactions with Pakistan. The ideology's aggressive and nationalist tendencies have led to a belligerent approach towards Pakistan, evident in statements and actions that reflect hatred and bigotry.<sup>42</sup> The idiosyncratic behavior of leaders, such as Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who holds a Hindutva mindset, further shapes India's foreign policy decisions. The aggressive stance and actions exhibited by the Indian government, particularly against Muslims, align with the characteristics of aggressive leaders outlined by neo-classical realism. This aggressive approach is in stark contrast to the conciliatory and pacifist nature of Pakistan's political leadership.<sup>43</sup>

Such systemic pressures, stemming from the anarchic international system and the desire for power maximization, also play a role in influencing India's actions towards Pakistan. The perceived threats and misperceptions from Pakistan contribute to India's aggressive posture, driven by Hindutva ideology. The domestic variables, including internal politics in India and the influence of Hindutva, shape the decision-making process and further exacerbate tensions between the two countries.<sup>44</sup>

A comparison of the leadership mindsets in both Pakistan and India reveals a stark contrast. The Indian government, driven by Hindutva extremists, displays a combative approach, while the leadership in Pakistan

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<sup>41</sup> Britannica, "Neorealism in international relations" *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/realism-political-and-social-science/Neorealism-in-international-relations>.

<sup>42</sup> Caitlin Smith, "Personality in foreign policy decision-making," *E-International Relations* October 16 (2012), <https://www.e-ir.info/2012/10/16/personality-in-foreign-policy-decision-making/>.

<sup>43</sup> Firoozabadi, Jalal Dehghani, and Mojtaba Zare Ashkezari, "Neo-classical Realism in International Relations." *Asian Social Science*, Vol. 12, No. 6, May 16 (2016), 95-99, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v12n6p95>.

<sup>44</sup> Deepa S. Reddy, Deepa S., "What is neo-about neo-Hindutva?" *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 26, No. 4, October 2 (2018), 483-490, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09584935.2018.1548009>.

adopts a pacifist and conciliatory stance. The absence of a foreign minister in Pakistan during the Nawaz Sharif government allowed Hindutva extremists in India to propagate anti-Pakistan propaganda without adequate counteraction.<sup>45</sup>

The example of the Balakot surgical strike in 2019 highlights the aggressive actions taken by India, claiming to target alleged terrorists within Pakistani territory. This act of aggression was met with a response from Pakistan, reflecting the pressure from the Pakistani public and the idiosyncratic behavior of its leadership. The comparison of power, capabilities, and reactions to events further underscores the contrasting approaches of both countries, with India displaying a disregard for UN resolutions on Kashmir and revoking its special status, while Pakistan seeks diplomatic resolutions.

Overall, neo-classical realism offers valuable analytical tools to understand the impact of Hindutva on Indo-Pak relations. The theory's emphasis on systemic, cognitive, and domestic variables allows for a comprehensive analysis of the factors shaping India's foreign policy towards Pakistan. The contrasting leadership mindsets, systemic pressures, and domestic variables all contribute to the dynamics between the two countries. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for promoting dialogue, conflict resolution, and the pursuit of peaceful relations in the region.

## **Findings and Discussion**

The Hindutva policy pursued by the Indian government has significantly impacted the diplomatic and strategic relations between India and Pakistan. This section discusses how Hindutva has influenced these relations, highlighting key findings and their implications. The abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, which granted special status to Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, has been a major catalyst for heightened tensions and mistrust between India and Pakistan. The revocation of these articles by the Indian government, driven by the Hindutva ideology, not only disregarded the aspirations and rights of the people of Kashmir but also undermined the delicate balance in the region. This unilateral move has further complicated the long-standing Kashmir dispute and hindered any prospects for meaningful dialogue and resolution.

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<sup>45</sup> Malik, "Indian Surgical Strike: Implications and Response by Pakistan," 101.

In addition to the abrogation of these articles, India's alleged interference in Balochistan has added fuel to the fire. Indian Army officers have openly admitted to supporting Baloch separatists, discussing plans to destabilize the region. This interference has amplified animosity and security concerns, deepening the distrust between the two countries. Pakistan has consistently raised its voice against such interventions and called for international attention to India's aggressive actions. Furthermore, India's engagement in the Chabahar port, viewed as a counter to China-Pakistan cooperation, has strained bilateral relations. India sees The Chabahar port project as a strategic maneuver to expand its maritime influence and undermine China's Belt and Road Initiative, specifically the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. This move has added another dimension of competition and suspicion to the already complex relationship between India and Pakistan.

The Hindutva ideology has also influenced the CBMs between the two countries. India's aggressive approach and the halt in non-military CBMs have impeded progress towards fostering trust and peace. CBMs such as cultural exchanges, sports diplomacy, and academic collaborations play a vital role in bridging gaps and promoting understanding. However, the Hindutva-driven policies have undermined these measures, reinforcing a narrative of hostility and mistrust. Moreover, endorsing surgical strikes as a form of Hindutva has further strained relations. India's use of surgical strikes to project strength and dominance in response to perceived threats from Pakistan-based militant groups has escalated tensions and fueled a cycle of retaliation. Though India portrays these strikes as necessary acts of self-defense, are viewed by Pakistan as provocative and escalatory actions that undermine regional stability.

While analyzing these findings, it is evident that the Hindutva policy pursued by the Indian government has significantly shaped and influenced the diplomatic and strategic relations between India and Pakistan. Hindutva's aggressive and nationalist tendencies have driven the decision-making process in India, perpetuating a narrative of dominance and exacerbating tensions. The interplay between systemic pressures, such as the desire for regional dominance, cognitive variables, including threats and misperceptions, and domestic factors shaped by Hindutva ideologies, has created a complex and challenging dynamic between the two countries. These

findings highlight the need for a comprehensive understanding of Hindutva's influence on Indo-Pak relations and the imperative for constructive dialogue, diplomacy, and conflict resolution mechanisms. It is crucial for the international community to recognize and engage with the implications of Hindutva-driven policies on regional stability and work towards de-escalation and fostering a climate of peace and cooperation. Further research and analysis are warranted to assess the long-term implications of Hindutva and explore potential avenues for reconciliation and sustainable peace between India and Pakistan.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the analysis of the Hindutva policy's implications on Indo-Pak diplomatic and strategic relations, several recommendations emerge to address the challenges and promote a more peaceful and cooperative relationship between the two countries. India and Pakistan must prioritize dialogue and engage in sustained diplomatic efforts. Open and meaningful communication channels can help bridge the trust deficit and foster a better understanding of each other's concerns and aspirations. Both countries should explore opportunities for high-level talks, Track-II dialogues, and other confidence-building measures to create an environment conducive to resolving their long-standing disputes. The international community, including regional powers and global organizations, should actively facilitate dialogue and conflict resolution. Increased engagement and mediation efforts can help de-escalate tensions and encourage a peaceful resolution of outstanding issues. International actors should also encourage India to reconsider its Hindutva-driven policies and emphasize the importance of respecting the rights and aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

There is a need to revive and strengthen non-military confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan. Cultural exchanges, people-to-people interactions, sports diplomacy, and academic collaborations can help build trust and foster mutual understanding. Resuming trade and economic cooperation can also contribute to stability and prosperity in the region, creating avenues for shared benefits and interdependence. It is crucial to address the issue of alleged interference in Balochistan and other internal matters. India should refrain from engaging in activities that fuel regional instability and instead focus on constructive engagement and peaceful resolution of disputes. Pakistan, on the other hand, should present evidence

of Indian interference to the international community and seek their support in addressing this concern.

Finally, both India and Pakistan need to recognize the importance of regional cooperation and integration. By joining hands and promoting initiatives that transcend their bilateral disputes, such as the SAARC platform, they can work towards enhancing regional connectivity, trade, and people-to-people exchanges. Such regional collaboration can help build trust, foster economic development, and pave the way for a more stable and prosperous South Asia. The recommendations provided above seek to promote dialogue, enhance confidence-building measures, and encourage regional cooperation to address the implications of the Hindutva policy on Indo-Pak relations. By embracing a spirit of cooperation, mutual respect, and inclusivity, both countries can move towards a more peaceful and prosperous future, overcoming the challenges posed by ideological differences and historical disputes.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindutva policy has introduced key elements into India's domestic policies that have had significant implications for both the country's internal dynamics and its relations with Pakistan. The key elements of Modi's Hindutva policy integrated into India's domestic policies include the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A, alleged interference in Balochistan, engagement in the Chabahar port, influence on confidence-building measures, and the endorsement of surgical strikes. These elements reflect the nationalist and assertive agenda of the Hindutva ideology, aiming to consolidate power, promote Hindu supremacy, and assert India's dominance in the region.

The Hindutva policy has had a specific and discernible impact on diplomatic and strategic relations between India and Pakistan. The abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir has escalated tensions and deepened mistrust between the two countries. India's alleged interference in Balochistan, openly discussed by Indian Army officers, has further strained bilateral relations, and raised security concerns. Additionally, India's engagement in the Chabahar port has created a competitive dynamic vis-à-vis China-Pakistan cooperation, intensifying the regional power struggle. The Hindutva ideology has also influenced confidence-building measures, as India's aggressive approach and the halt of

non-military CBMs have hindered progress in improving bilateral relations. The endorsement of surgical strikes as a form of Hindutva has further exacerbated tensions and fueled a cycle of retaliation. These developments have contributed to an environment of mistrust, hindering the prospects for meaningful dialogue and peaceful resolution of long-standing issues between the two countries. Overall, the Hindutva policy pursued by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has had far-reaching consequences for both India's domestic landscape and its relations with Pakistan. It reflects a nationalist agenda that seeks to assert India's dominance and promote a specific brand of Hindu nationalism. The specific elements of this policy, such as the abrogation of special status in Jammu and Kashmir and allegations of interference in Balochistan, have significantly impacted diplomatic and strategic relations between India and Pakistan, exacerbating tensions and hindering the path to peaceful coexistence. To achieve stability and reconciliation in the region, it is crucial for both countries to prioritize dialogue, de-escalation, and a commitment to resolving disputes through peaceful means, while respecting the rights and aspirations of all stakeholders involved.