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ΠΣΑ

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Editor's Preface to the Fall Edition

Here at Elon University, we are extremely grateful for the opportunity to host the Pi Sigma Alpha Undergraduate Journal of Politics for the coming years. We are proud to present the Fall 2020 issue, and congratulate all authors published in this issue.

This journal seeks to highlight the intellectual curiosity that has led to innovative scholarship in all subfields of political science, scholarship that addresses timely questions, is carefully crafted, and utilizes diverse methodologies. We are committed to intellectual integrity, a fair and objective double-blind review process, and a high standard of scholarship. Through this publication, we aim to accentuate student achievements in political science research and showcase the works of undergraduate scholars, some of which has been traditionally ignored in the broader field of political science literature, despite representing the future of this discipline.

As an editorial team composed entirely of women, we understand that this occurrence is not a common one. Following the lead of the all-female American Political Science Review (APSR) Editorial Board, we are excited to promote research in the areas of "American politics, comparative politics, international relations, political theory, public law and policy, racial and ethnic politics, the politics of gender and sexuality and qualitative and quantitative research methods." This journal values the relationships formed through student-faculty collaboration and aims to inspire a culture of intellectual curiosity that expands far beyond the college campus. In addition to recognizing the academic endeavors of undergraduate students, we hope to further encourage and empower students to seek out knowledge and realize their potential in contributing to growing scholarship in a variety of disciplines.

In the journal's first year, we want to emphasize our appreciation for all the individuals who have made this first publication possible. Our advisors, Dr. Laura Roselle, Dr. Baris Kesgin, and Dr. Aaron Sparks, have been unwavering in their support of us throughout this entire process. Without their consistent support and insights, this issue would not have been possible. In addition, we would like to thank the entirety of the Political Science and Policy Studies Department at Elon University, as well as our Faculty Advisory Editorial Board reviewers for all of their hard work and support.

Going forward, we are excited to create a culture within our Editorial Board that embraces these values and continues to strive for excellence for the remainder of the journal's tenure at Elon University. Thank you for your continued support and readership of our publication, we hope you enjoy our first edition.

Sincerely,

The Editorial Board at Elon University

Submission of Manuscripts

The Journal accepts manuscripts from undergraduates of any class and major. Members of Pi Sigma Alpha are especially encouraged to enter their work. We strive to publish papers of the highest quality in all areas of political science.

Generally, selected manuscripts have been well-written works with a fully developed thesis and strong argumentation stemming from original analysis. Authors may be asked to revise their work before being accepted for publication.

Submission deadlines are October 1st for the Fall edition and February 15th for the Spring edition. Manuscripts are accepted on a rolling basis; therefore early submissions are strongly encouraged.

To submit your work, please email psajournalelon@gmail.com with an attached Word document of the manuscript. Please include your name, university and contact details (mailing address, email address, and phone number) in a separate document.

Submitted manuscripts must include a short abstract (approximately 150 words), citations and references that follow the *APSA Style Manual for Political Science*. Please do not exceed the maximum page length of 35 double-spaced pages, which includes references, tables, figures, and appendices.

The Journal is a student-run enterprise with editors and an Editorial Board that are undergraduate students and Pi Sigma Alpha members at Elon University.

The Editorial Board relies heavily on the help of our Faculty Advisory Board consisting of political science faculty from across the nation, including members of the Pi Sigma Alpha Executive Council. Due to the time committed to the manuscript review process, we would like to remind students to submit only one manuscript at a time.

Please direct any questions about submissions or the Journal's upcoming editions to the editors at Elon University: psajournalelon@gmail.com.

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Religious Nationalism, Securitization Narratives, and Hindu-Muslim Tensions in India, 2015-2020

Kaveri Sarkar, Beloit College

According to the Hate Crime Watch, 90% of the 254 cases of violence against religious minorities documented between January 2009 and October 2018 in India have taken place after the BJP assumed power in 2014. In an effort to understand the hike in tensions between Hindus and Muslims in the last five years, I examine the role of religion in the narratives of Indian nationhood, and its contribution to this intergroup conflict. Through the lenses of primordialism, modernism, ethno-symbolism, banal nationalism, and orientalism, I conceptualize the Indian nation and outline reasons other scholars have attributed to the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India. Central to my argument is the application of a constructivist security approach developed by Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde (1998), which follows a paradigm of securitizing actors that make securitizing moves to protect a referent object from “the other,” thereby framing intergroup conflict as a security issue. Applying this security paradigm in the Indian context, I identify some key securitizing actors like Hindu nationalist groups, including the BJP, and analyze their securitizing moves like speech acts on Twitter, use of Hindu symbols, and victimization of sacred Hindu traditions in order to draw the Hindu community’s attention to a subjective, existential threat that Muslims pose to the Hindu nation. I examine how the securitizing moves have led to the disruption of human rights with the Babri Masjid demolition that took place in 1992, withdrawal of Article 370 that afforded special status and autonomy to the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir, introduction of controversial citizenship laws, and a general surge in physical and verbal violence over the last five years. The use of this constructivist security paradigm not only adds a security dimension to the work of previous scholars, but also takes the recent instances of intergroup conflict into account to help explain how the increase in tensions are a result of the narratives of Indian nationhood being drawn along religious lines. My thesis suggests that the very secular meaning of India that founding members had envisioned is being challenged as the increasing electoral representation of the BJP and the increase in intergroup violence after the BJP came to power reflect the increased role of religion in the evolution of Indian nationhood, as well as in the collective upper-caste Hindu consciousness.

INTRODUCTION

There is a disturbing global trend of right-wing populist authoritarian regimes gaining power and using an exclusive brand of nationalism to create more homogenous societies. Against this background, India, which is constitutionally a democratic and secular state, is observing increasing tensions between the majority religious group—the Hindus and the minority religious group—the Muslims. Since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has come to power in 2014, violence against Muslims has increased. Not only has the number of reported mob lynchings increased, but the BJP’s political dominance has also empowered voices that strongly advocate for India to become a Hindu nation.

According to the Hate Crime Watch (Mander 2018), 90% of the 254 cases of violence against religious minorities documented between January 2009 and October 2018 have

taken place after the BJP assumed power in 2014. Additionally, with the BJP forming state governments either on its own or with allies in 18 out of 29 states (Iwanek 2020), 66% of these violent cases were carried out in states where the BJP maintains power (Bajoria 2019). There has not only been a drastic increase in physical violence, but also a surge in verbal violence. The period of 2014–2018 has seen a 500% increase in the verbal violence propagated by elected officials in comparison to the five years before 2014, as evidenced by a survey conducted by New Delhi Television (Bajoria 2019). Ninety percent of these communally divisive speeches, many of which include cow protection as a theme, have been made by the BJP members themselves.

In an effort to understand the hike in tensions between Hindus and Muslims in the last 5 years, this paper examines the role of religion in the narratives of Indian nationhood,

and its contribution to this intergroup conflict. This paper begins by reviewing literature on nations and nationalism in general. Through the lenses of primordialism, modernism, ethno-symbolism, banal nationalism, and orientalism, the Indian nation is conceptualized and reasons other scholars have attributed to the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India are outlined. Central to this argument is the application of a constructivist security approach developed by Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde (1998), which follows a paradigm of securitizing actors that make securitizing moves to protect a referent object from “the other,” thereby framing intergroup conflict as a security issue. Applying this security paradigm in the Indian context, some key securitizing actors such as Hindu nationalist groups, including the BJP, are identified and their securitizing moves are analyzed such as speech acts on Twitter, use of Hindu symbols, and victimization of sacred Hindu traditions in order to draw the Hindu community’s attention to a subjective, existential threat that Muslims pose to the Hindu nation. This paper examines how the securitizing moves have led to the disruption of human rights with the Babri Masjid demolition that took place in 1992, withdrawal of Article 370 that afforded special status and autonomy to the Muslim-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir, introduction of controversial citizenship laws, and a general surge in physical and verbal violence over the last five years. This research reviews some of the policy outcomes that these moves have led to, and demonstrates how these security actors and moves are defining narratives of Indian nationhood along religious lines and consequently, leading to an increase in inter-religious conflict in India.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While the academic study of nationalism has been a more recent development in the social sciences, nations and nationalism have been present from much earlier. There are different theories and approaches to the idea and existence of nations and depending on the theory, the question of what and when a nation came about has a different conclusion. Some of the theoretical approaches to nationalism are as follows.

Modernism:

The study of nationalism is most saturated with the theory of modernism, which proposes that nations and nationalism emerged as a consequence to modernization. Considering nations and nationalism to be epiphenomenal, this theory views the stages of modernization and industrialization to be necessary precedents of the nation (Ichijo and Uzelac 2005).

Some scholars have tried to answer the rise of communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims by focusing on the problem created by modernity after independence. Freitag (1996) argues that a significant contribution to communalism in India is the gap felt between the state and the civil society in postcolonial India. Van der Veer (1996) takes a slightly

different route to suggest that communalism cannot be attributed to material reasons solely. Instead of only looking at religious motivation, he claims that communalism is entrenched in social power relations of the Indian society. Along similar lines, Sumit Sarkar (1996) claims that Hindutva emerged as an upper-class reaction to lower-castes’ and women’s social revolutions, which were in alignment with secular ideals and planned economy.

When the Indian nation took birth in the midnight of 14th August 1947, the founders of the constitution advocated for secular ideals—all religions were to be considered equal and the majority religion—Hinduism would not take precedence over the others. However, these ideals may not adequately capture the sentiments of Hindu nationalism that was at play from before the partition in more subtle ways and ultimately advanced the rhetoric of the partition. Leaders like Savarkar, Tilak, and Golwalkar advocated for Hindu nationalism as early as the 1920s in backlash to a pan-Muslim identity (Jaffrelot 2007), and as Tanika Sarkar (1996) outlines, hints of communalism underpin the nationalistic writings of the famous Bengali India writer Bankimchandra Chatterjee. Similarly, Hasan (1996) has highlighted how the Indian National Congress’ creation of a separate electorate for the Muslim population before the partition fed into a separate Muslim identity and consequently, shaped the way Muslim elites and the general Muslim population conjured collective religious identities.

Primordialism:

In stark contrast to the modernity theory, Primordialism considers nations and nationalism to have existed from time immemorial. Viewing nations as natural, it believes they are a part of human nature, and the birth of a new nation signifies the awakening of an inoperative identity. The concept of ethnicity is central to the primordial theory, and the innate nature of ethnicity is used to explain the loyalty that humans have towards the nation (Ichijo and Uzelac 2005).

Primordialism, in the context of Indian nationhood, would mean that the Indian nation comprises an ethny which has been present for centuries. This essentialist view would thus consider Aryans to be native to the land and Hindus to be their descendants, while framing Muslims to be foreign invaders (Us-Salam 2018). Other scholars draw into Samuel Huntington’s idea of “clash of civilizations” to describe India as comprising two religions that bear an ancient hatred (Huntington 1993, 186-194). This myopic view was also conveniently used by the British to understand Indian society as having two mutually hostile religious groups—Hindus and Muslims (Upadhyay and Robinson 2012, 35-37). According to Said (1978), the discourse of Orientalism helped imperial Europe to ‘know’ the colonized society in a way that would help control it. Thus, imperial Britain used the policies of divide and rule to create new fractures within Hindus and Muslims in Indian society. While this thesis acknowledges this as part of the various

social processes that have contributed to inter-group conflict between Hindus and Muslims, it focuses more on the role of actors and their moves after India attained independence from the British in 1947, particularly after the BJP gained political representation in the 1980s.

Another interpretation grapples with the “Meaning of India” to argue that India at its core has always been equated with Hindu characteristics (Ludden 1996). In Early 1900s, Bal Gangadhar Tilak sought to awaken a pan-Hindu national identity to galvanize people against the British colonial rule (Seth 2006), while M.S. Golwalkar, the second chief of the Hindu nationalist group--the Rashtriya SwayamSevak Sangh (RSS), was one of the first to equate India with a Hindu nation in response to the Muslim mobilization in the Khilafat movement. Golwalkar cemented religious-nationalism with the notion that Hinduism being the oldest religion to exist in the land, mandated that outsiders who arrived later should be required to operate under the dominant Hindu ideology (Jaffrelot 2007). Subsequent Hindu nationalists have drawn on this to cast Islam as foreign to India, and espouse second-class citizenship for Muslims, if not even encourage their expulsion (Ludden 1996).

My thesis is also inspired by the more contemporary approach of everyday nationalism introduced by Michael Billig (1995). Billig, who has a social psychological background, recognizes national identity as being rooted and reproduced in our mundane everyday routines and habits. He insightfully underscores the role of politicians in producing everyday nationalism. Politicians, even when disliked, are household names that saturate the lives of citizens and effectively disseminate sentiments of patriotism, which Billig (1995) considers to be a national sentiment. This thesis draws upon this approach to show how politicians, especially Indian prime minister Narendra Modi, effectively project the sentiments of nationalism and patriotism through their internet content and lifestyles. It also includes some of the ways Hindu nationalists have appropriated the primordial question of who is native to the land to cast the Indian nation as a Hindu nation, as can be seen with the Babri Masjid demolition of 1992.

Ethno-symbolism:

Ethno-symbolism, an approach rather than a theory, provides a more nuanced position on the subject of nationalism. The father of ethno-symbolism, Anthony D. Smith, effectively includes positions from the previous two theories while adding fresh insights to the study of nationalism. Viewing the nation as a social group with strong roots in historicity, overtime, this social group turns into a nation (Smith 2001). Smith describes it as “a named and self-defined community whose members cultivate common myths, memories, symbols and values, possess and disseminate a distinctive public culture, reside in and identify a historic homeland, and create and disseminate common laws and customs” (Smith 2001). Commenting on the emotions and

passions evoked by national identities, he says that, the reasons for the durability and strength of national identities can only be understood by exploring collective beliefs and sentiments about the “sacred foundation” of the nation and by considering their relationship to the “older beliefs, symbols and rituals of traditional religions” (Smith 2003).

My analysis of the narratives of nationhood most aligns with the dynamic approach of ethno-symbolism as it offers flexibility to capture the ongoing social processes that lead to the conceptualization of a nation. Ethno-symbolism accounts for the power the public dissemination of a TV serialized *Ramayana* in the late 1980s had in invoking older beliefs, myths, and symbols. Arvind Rajagopal (2001) in his book *Politics after Television: Hindu Nationalism and Reshaping of the Public in India* claims that featuring the mythical Hindu epic *Ramayana* in the form of a television serial was monumental for Hindu nationalism as it broke a decades long practice of not having religious content being shown on TV. He proposes that it contributed to the narrative and cultural/symbolic imagery of Lord Ram that Hindu nationalists then chanced upon at that time to advocate for a new era of politics (Rajagopal 2001). Further, a monumental historical instance— the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992— was a seminal event in India’s communal fabric. This thesis is heavily informed by the Babri masjid demolition as the notable event speaks to the otherness of the Muslim community as well as points to the direct role of Hindu nationalist groups. It also aligns with the conspicuous rise and political influence of these groups for the first time since independence.

In the 1980s, Hindu nationalist groups like the Rashtriya SwayamSevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), through its affiliate political party--the BJP, gained striking electoral support with the use of cultural and religious imagery, hype of the media and rallies to mobilize popular support. Basu (1996) proposes that this advent of Hindu communalism is a complex mixture of both- people on the ground being disillusioned and discontented as well as the cementing of the leadership of Hindu nationalist groups at the top. While the use of symbols have effectively advanced the political rhetoric of Hindu nationalist groups, however, the extraordinary contemporary measures that have marginalized Muslims are rooted in how the differences between Hindus and Muslims have been defined as a security issue.

While narratives of Indian nationhood have often been defined along religious lines from the time of partition, if not before, the blatant use of Hindu jingoistic ideology by Hindu nationalists has brought it to the forefront in recent years. The unprecedented victory in 2014--which for the first time saw a party other than the Indian National Congress score a governing majority on its own--by Narendra Modi in 2014, and subsequently, his re-election in 2019 has progressively stoked the Hindu nationalist movement. While his election win in 2014 was more in response to the lackluster performance by the incumbent Indian National Congress (Varshney 2016),

his reelection could be attributed to a growing sentiment of Hindu nationalism. To make sense of the increasing communal tensions in India, static approaches that draw solely on primordialism and modernism do not provide an adequate explanation. Many social processes that have led to the tightening of religious consciousness as they relate to national identity have happened over the years and have been the product of multiple factors.

METHODOLOGY

Constructivist Scholars like Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde (1998), who together make up part of the Copenhagen school, offer a nuanced definition of security in their book titled *Security: A New Framework of Analysis*. In this book, they argue that groups define their security through narratives that identify a referent object (which can be say a nation, language, culture, economy) something that is treasured and needs to be preserved, a subjective source of a threat or “the other” — which is most often an actor of group of actors that is construed as the other — and the threat itself. This could be military invasion but also other things like erosion of national identity, lack of jobs in the economy, or cultural sovereignty. What Buzan et al. call “securitizing actors” are those who hold cultural, social, political or economic power (like the media, or government) and they make a “securitizing move”, which consists of them appealing to an intended audience that the referent object that group values is under threat by an enemy (Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde 1998). The intended audience then accepts or rejects the move of the securitizing actor. Depending on the degree of success, the securitizing actors might deem the group to be under “existential threat” and thus propose “extraordinary measures” that require violation of standard civil rights (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998). This article attempts to look at the dynamic rise of communal tensions as a result of the security paradigm, which helps provide some insights as to why the rhetoric of Hindu nationalism is gaining traction.

This research uses an inductive process of reasoning to show how Hindu nationalist groups have effectively tapped into events before colonial rule, during colonial period, and after independence to advance their political rhetoric. This methodology strongly relies on the security paradigm laid out by Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde (1998). By delineating some key events, the securitizing actors and the securitizing moves they made are identified to underscore a subjective source of threat posed by the Muslims or “the other” to the Hindu community’s referent object — the Hindu nation. While these security threats are subjective, this research will examine the symbols that security actors used to highlight and persuade the community of the perceived security threats facing their referent object. This article also identifies patterns of how securitizing actors have framed narratives in a way that makes the Hindu community fear marginalization. Furthermore,

some of the extraordinary measures and policy outcomes that these securitizing moves have led to are outlined.

I identify securitizing actors in this case study by looking at key members of the Indian society who have been involved in furthering the rhetoric of Hindu nationalism and leading to communal policy outcomes. This article considers securitizing moves to be the speeches and lifestyle choices made by securitizing actors that directly or indirectly frame narratives of Indian nationhood along the lines of Hindu nation and construct Muslims to be a threat to the safety of the Hindu nation. Data not only includes interpretation of some key historical events like the Babri Masjid demolition and Gujarat riots as they relate to the role of securitizing actors who still hold prominence a few decades later and were pivotal in shaping the Hindu-Muslim conflict, but also speeches, Twitter posts and comments on the posts of elected BJP officials and the current prime minister, Narendra Modi.

This research’s independent variable, religious narratives of nationhood, is defined as the cultural resources — shared traditions, symbols, myths — that a social group can derive a sense of belonging and religious identity from (Smith 2001). The dependent variable, tensions between Hindus and Muslims, is operationalized in terms of inter-group conflict, physical and verbal, and in terms of anti-Muslim sentiments expressed in public and political forums. Physical violence is operationalized in terms of number of reported inter-group attacks and verbal violence is codified in terms of the ways people demonize Muslims on an administrative level or on social media. In terms of conceptualizing a nation and its origin, this research’s use of the term aligns most closely to the definition laid out by Dr. Anthony Smith’s theoretical approach of ethno-symbolism. It considers a nation to possess the following characteristics of “self-definition, myth and memory making, territorialisation, public culture and legal standardization” (Smith 2001).

This article’s hypothesis is that while religion has had a role in narratives of Indian nationhood since the time of pre-independence, its role in the formation of narratives of Indian nationhood has only seen an upward trajectory since the 1980s. This analysis primarily focuses on the post-1980 period, which saw the rise and electoral representation of Hindu nationalist groups, as well as since 2014 when the BJP made a strong electoral comeback. This paper argues that because of some social processes like the electoral representation of Hindu nationalist groups in the 1980s and 2014, these narratives of nationhood are increasingly being framed along the lines of the Hindu religion. This has granted legitimacy to these groups to mobilize the Hindu community around the banner of homogenous religious symbols and further, highlight a supposed security threat posed to their “Hindu nation” by Muslims thereby leading to the rise of tensions witnessed between Hindus and Muslims. This is not a recent trend but a culmination of social processes taking place over many decades. This research pays close attention to key events that are

interpreted as symbols of religious nationalism today in these narratives. These events include the rise of Hindu nationalist groups in the 1980s, featuring of the Hindu epic Ramayana on state television channels, the Babri Masjid (mosque) demolition, and the role of the current government in power. After summarizing these key events, the role they played in gradually shaping the narratives of Indian along religious lines will be illustrated.

The limitations of this paper include that the statistics of hate crime acts as reported in this analysis are mostly from the organization Hate Crime Watch (Mander 2018). It gathers data primarily from English media. Thus, the statistics most likely aren't able to grasp the scale of the actual violence. National press only records the graver cases with many cases going unreported as the BJP and the police dismiss and even cover up these incidents. The BJP has often attempted to camouflage the severity and intent behind the violence against religious minorities by either ascribing other reasons for the violence or by downplaying them to be instances of common breakdown of law and order (Mander 2018). Furthermore, the data analyzed using the speeches of elected officials and from the comments sections of Facebook and Twitter only consist of those who make their opinions known on the internet. A sizable population in the Internet, particularly those living in the rural areas, do not have routine access to social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and thus, the impact of securitizing moves on that section of the Hindu community has not been accounted for.

DATA ANALYSIS

The Role of Hindu Nationalist Groups

Scattered conflicts between the Hindus and Muslims before the British colonial rule, the divisive colonial policies of the British, and the bloody partition of India and Pakistan carried out along religious lines all make up the social processes that led the narratives of Indian nationhood to be formed along religious lines. However, the recent increase in conflict between Hindus and Muslims can be directly traced back to the rise of Hindu Nationalist groups in the 1980s. While some of the Hindu nationalist groups were extant even during the very time of the partition in 1947, it wasn't until the 1980s that they gained political representation through their political affiliate, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and were effective at making securitizing moves to protect the Hindu community's referent object—the Hindu nation—from the subjective threat posed by Muslims and their religion of Islam.

The rise of the Hindu nationalist groups, and the BJP in particular, is noteworthy because it changed the course of Indian politics. These groups have been crucial in framing the narratives of Indian nationhood along Hindu traditions, mobilizing the support of the Hindu community, as well as making securitizing moves that distort and appropriate history to highlight the supposed threat that Muslims pose to Hindus. In the cases where the political leanings of hate crime

perpetrators have been identified, 83% of them have affiliations to Hindu nationalist groups (Mander 2018).

Below this research will highlight how securitizing moves made by Hindu nationalist groups like the Hindu Mahasabha, the Rashtriya SwayamSevak Sangh (RSS), and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), in addition to the BJP, have aimed at defining Indian nationhood along Hinduism and creating a Hindu national consciousness.

The *Ramayana*

The Hindu epic, *Ramayana*, was serialized and broadcasted every Sunday on national television between January 1987 to August 1989. This enabled it to reach the Indian masses through the singular entertainment channel on national television, and won historic nationwide viewership. Its release coincided with one of the most important stages of the *Ram Janmabhoomi* (Birthplace of Ram) movement, which sought to demolish a mosque, the Babri Masjid, in order to construct a Hindu temple for the Hindu god Ram in its place. Proponents of this movement claimed that Muslims in the 16th century had built a mosque over a pre-existing Ram temple in the holy city of Ayodhya, which, according to Hindu traditions, is Lord Ram's birthplace. The Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, which was in its nascent stages in the 1980s, leveraged the prominent religious symbol of the God-King Ram from the serial to advance its political agenda of Hindu nationalism (Rajagopal 2001, 23).

The BJP's primary goal became to build "a grand temple to Lord Ram" on the land where the Babri Masjid existed (18). The BJP, along with other Hindu nationalist groups like the RSS, mobilized volunteers to lead processions from Delhi to Ayodhya. In these processions, volunteers took inspiration from the serial of *Ramayana* to dress up with bows like Ram and his brother Lakshman. They took pictures in front of a lump of bricks which denoted the temple they would be constructing for Ram and labeled the bricks as Ram and the Sanskrit word *shilas*, thus highlighting its religious connotation. Importantly, one of the VHP activists described a tiff with the Ayodhya police as "What you are seeing today is a replay of the battle scenes you have witnessed on the television screen in the Mahabharat epic. Only this time the fight is for who will win the throne of Lucknow and Delhi (Rajagopal 2001).

Sequences of the serial, in turn, directly acknowledged the VHP rally by showing Ram praying on the land of his birthplace as an alternative storyline (Rajagopal 2001). The dissemination of the serial *Ramayana* and the narrative that it created was monetized by Hindu nationalists who used the cultural references to unite Hindus and bolster their sense of history and togetherness. Hindu militancy turned to the epic's battle scenes for inspiration as it instigated Hindus to feel that they had a cause to rise up to. They were attracted by the claims put forth by Hindu nationalist groups that cast Muslims as the enemy, which then led to the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

Babri Masjid Demolition

According to popular Hindu belief, the city of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram. Babri Masjid was built in Ayodhya in the 16th century by a Mughal general—Mir Baqi. Members of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) were convinced that the Babri Masjid was built on the exact location of Ram's birthplace in the 16th century after destroying a Ram temple which had been constructed in the 11th century.

On 6th December 1992, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and other affiliated Hindu nationalist groups mobilized a total of 150,000 VHP and BJP *kar sevaks* to gather at the disputed site of the Babri Masjid (Jaffrelot 2009, 1-19). BJP leaders like Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti made instigating speeches. There were police provisions in place but as the crowd got more instigated, one person managed to get past the police barricades to climb onto the dome of the Masjid while waving a saffron flag. This resulted in the crowd hurling past the police and attacking the building with axes, hammers and grappling hooks, ultimately leading to the demolition of the building (Guha 2007, 633-659).

This seminal event gave rise to months of inter-communal riots and violence between Hindus and Muslims. Homes and shops were looted and burnt down, places of worship destroyed, and the violence spread to cities like Mumbai, Surat, Ahmedabad, Kanpur, Delhi, and Bhopal. A total of about 2000 people died, most of them being Muslims. The communal violence that took place in the aftermath of the demolition, contributed to the Mumbai bombings of 1993 as well as other terrorist acts by Jihadi groups (Guha 2007, 633-659).

While there is historical evidence in the form of inscriptions that the mosque was built by Mir Baqi in honor of Emperor Babur, till date there is a lack of concrete evidence that confirms that the Babri Masjid was on the site of a temple. Historians have been unsuccessful in locating literary sources in search for any mention of a destruction of a temple (Gopal et al. 1990, 76-81). The singular piece of evidence used to promote claims of a Ram temple destruction is the Sanskrit text *Skanda Purana*, which according to archeologists and historians, provides no confirmation to the claim put forth by the Hindu nationalist group (Sharma 2003). Furthermore, the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) stated that the land on which the Babri Masjid stood on previously used to be non-Islamic structure, and no concrete evidence was found that suggested that the structure was a Ram temple (Business Today 2019).

While the Babri Masjid which was never a point of contention before India's independence (Udayakumar 1997, 11-26), Hindu nationalist groups like the VHP, RSS and the BJP distorted history to highlight communal identities and advanced their contemporary political rhetoric. These groups conveniently chanced upon Britain's myopic view in addition to Tilak's early revivalist nationalism, to create a narrative that casted Muslims as invaders in the holy land of Hindus.

Their claims of Muslims having destroyed a Hindu temple of the beloved Lord Ram helped the Hindu community construe Muslims as "the other" that posed threats to their religious sanctity and crafted Babri Masjid as something that symbolized the Muslim takeover or destruction of Hindu sacredness and made the demolition as justified. In addition to the symbolic relevance of the Babri Masjid, as Udayakumar (1997, 11-26) wrote, Ayodhya's mythological significance made it the perfect stage to carry out "communal drama". The securitizing moves consisted of mobilizing the support of people using religious symbols of Ram, the incendiary speeches made on the day of the demolition, as well as the actual destruction of the mosque.

Narendra Modi

One of the most crucial securitizing actors of the last few years has been India's current prime minister, Narendra Modi. Importantly, Modi started his political career with a RSS affiliated student group and then worked for the RSS itself for almost 10 years. Consequently, he joined the BJP in 1987, and rose up the ranks swiftly to become general secretary of Gujarat for the party (Kaplan 2009). Modi was the chief minister in the Indian state of Gujarat for 12 years, notably during the Gujarat riots of 2002, before becoming the prime minister of the country in May of 2014.

Narendra Modi is one of the key securitizing actors because of the massive political power he has amassed, earlier in the state of Gujarat, and now in the entire country. He also receives unprecedented media attention because of his charismatic personality, passionate speeches and humble background. His popularity among Non-Resident Indians stems from an attempt to elevate India's status on the global stage. Thus, a lot of Modi's supporters, mostly Hindus, look up to him for his popular appeal. These supporters also praise him for his commitment to Hindu nationalist ideologies that aim to glorify Hindu traditions and practices. A major section of the Hindu society finds satisfaction in a leader that helps maintain the status quo of Hindus in Indian society as well as promote the superiority of Hindu culture to the rest of the world. This relates to the primordial belief that one has an inherent conviction in the superiority of one's own nation, in this case—a Hindu nation (Kedourie 1971).

While Modi has never stated anything on Twitter or Facebook that can explicitly be taken to mean that Hindu culture or the nation is under threat after he assumed the role of the prime minister, he has had a pivotal role in defining the narratives of Indian nationhood along religious lines. As this article will outline below, a lot of his tweets and Facebook posts contain cultural symbols that are associated with the Hindu religion. He has actively maintained a social media presence on Twitter and Facebook as well as published his thoughts on his monthly podcast *Mann ki baat* (Talk of the Mind). Through these, he has been effective in maintaining his populism and appeal by making himself relatable to the masses. Not only

has this helped Modi mobilize his Hindu support base, but it also indirectly helped his party members make more explicit securitizing moves. Further, Modi's Twitter and Facebook pages have comments sections, which have become a space where Hindu nationalists are able to bounce ideas off of each other and further convince themselves of the threat Hindus face in the hands of Muslims.

Additionally, while Modi is criticized by some sections of the Indian society for communal politics, his securitizing moves have been adequately successful in indirectly convincing a huge chunk of his intended audience, the Hindus, of the threat their nation faces. Thus, Modi was able to garner their support when he undertook extraordinary and harsh actions like enabling the Gujarat riots of 2002 as the chief minister, reversing Article 370, passing controversial citizenship laws, enabling his party members to instigate violence and maintaining silence during the Delhi riots of 2020.

Gujarat Riots of 2002

Modi engaged in more explicit securitizing moves prior to becoming the prime minister of India. One of the most noteworthy communal events that some scholars deem to classify as a pogrom, the Gujarat Riots, took place under his term. About 2000 people, most of whom were Muslims, died and over 400 women were raped. The riots were fueled after a fire killed 58 Hindu *kar sevaks* on a passenger train returning from the demolished Babri Masjid site in Ayodhya, after which allegation claimed that the fire was caused by Muslim mobs. This attribution of blame was supported by politically motivated and bribed investigations, however, independent committees after investigation concluded that the fire was an accidental occurrence (Jaffrelot 2011).

Modi declared February 28 to be a day of mourning in order and allowed the display of the victims' dead bodies in the biggest city of Gujarat (Thottam 2012). Through this securitizing move, Modi successfully brought the Hindu community's attention to tangible results of a presumed Muslim threat. The day of mourning, which some said "was a clear invitation to violence" (Luce 2010), witnessed severe dreadful attacks on Muslims. Mobs of Hindu men gang-raped Muslim women and shoved kerosene down the throats of women and men before setting them on fire. Muslim men in many cases were forcefully made to watch before they met the same fate. A lot of the perpetrators were RSS volunteers who were dressed in saffron colours and armed with weapons, gas cylinders, electoral lists and printouts of home addresses of Muslims. Not only did the Gujarat government under Modi not adequately compensate the 20,000 people rendered homeless, but Modi also commented how "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction" (Kaplan 2009). Modi, who held one day of funeral for the loss of the Hindu community, did not do the same for that of the Muslim community, which he even once called "baby-making factories" (Kaplan 2009).

Kashmir Lockdown

On August 3 2019, just a few months after another sweeping victory in the May general Indian elections, Modi and the BJP in an extraordinary measure passed a law revoking Article 370, which afforded special status to the Muslim majority state of Jammu and Kashmir. The state was broken into two federally administered parts—a part combining the Muslim-majority Kashmir and Hindu-majority Jammu, and another part consisting of the Buddhist-majority Ladakh (Pandey 2019).

The Modi government's justification for scraping Article 370, all while arresting Kashmiri leaders and shutting down internet in the region, was the promotion of peace and prosperity in Kashmir. Many Kashmiris view the government's allowance of real estate purchase to non-Kashmiris as a ploy to change religious demographics in the disputed region that hitherto limited property purchase and settlement to permanent residents. This unilateral move was considered unconstitutional by many as the national government did not consult with the leaders of Kashmir and garnered support from nationalists who thought the crack down on people unwilling to subscribe to Hindu nationalism was justified (Yasir, Raj, and Gettleman 2019).

Controversial Citizenship Laws

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is a law passed in December of 2019 that promises citizenship to Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jains, Parsis, and Sikhs who arrived in India before 2015 to escape religious persecution from the three neighbouring Islamic countries of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. This law received major criticism for clashing with the secular ethos of the country, and for being another tactic by the Hindu-Nationalist group to marginalize the minority Muslims. Narendra Modi dismisses claims of the law being anti-Muslim and blamed the opposition as spreading "lies and fear" in an attempt to detract from his good work and oust him from power (The Guardian 2019).

Another controversial law passed last year was the National Register of Citizens (NRC), that aims to remove illegal migrants (both Hindus and Muslims) from the state of Assam, which would leave about 2 million people stateless unless they are able to furnish proof of citizenship. Modi's closest political aide and India's Home Minister, Amit Shah in a speech last April had said, "First, we will bring the citizenship amendment bill and will give citizenship to the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain and Christian refugees, the religious minorities from the neighbouring nations. Then, we will implement NRC to flush out the infiltrators from our country" (The Guardian 2019).

These new laws reflect the outcome of the securitizing moves that securitizing actors like Modi, Amit Shah, and their fellow BJP officials have undertaken to further marginalize Muslims and advance Hindu culture. This is evidenced by Amit Shah's use of the word "infiltrators" to refer to those who are not unwelcome and seen as a threat to those who rightfully belong. In addition to the law blatantly excluding persecuted

minorities like the Ahmadiyya in Pakistan and the Rohingyas in Bangladesh (Human Rights Watch 2019), citizenship laws also directly speak to narratives of nationhood as they serve to politically attest to who belongs in the nation.

Use of Symbols

In alignment with what Billig (1995) underscores in his book *Banal Nationalism*, Modi routinely utilizes religious symbols to evoke sentiments of patriotism. His prolific Twitter posts make generous use of symbols that correspond to Hinduism. For example, early in April during the Covid-19 pandemic, he encouraged Indians to switch off and save electricity for 9 minutes at 9pm and to instead light a candle, a *diya* or a flashlight while standing in their balconies to show solidarity during tough times. He posted a picture of himself lighting an elaborate diya and retweeted many pictures of others doing the same (Twitter). Hence, the prime minister makes subtle references to the Hindu religion to relate with the population. He is also a big advocate of yoga, and declared a national yoga day soon after assuming power in 2014. While the health benefits of yoga are undeniable, Modi encourages people to incorporate such Hindu practices and traditions as part of their lifestyles. On the other hand, he has not done the same for other religious traditions. Many of his tweets also make explicit references to ancient Hindu tradition and Hindu gods (see figure 1 and figure 2) as an inspiration to governance and thus bases a lot of his popularity on achieving legitimacy from pious Hindu voters. These moves adopted by Modi for years now, while not securitizing in nature, attempt to mobilize his fan base under unified Hindu symbols, thereby rendering the securitizing moves made by Modi and other BJP members more effective.

Delhi Riots 2020

In the end of February 2020, violence between Hindus and Muslims erupted in the capital city of Delhi on a scale that hadn't taken place for decades. A mosque in Mustafabad in East Delhi was burned down in a way that raised comparisons to the Babri Masjid demolition almost 40 years ago. Muslim houses

were attacked, and shops burned down (Gettleman, Raj, and Yasir 2020). The police, which is under the direct jurisdiction of the federal government, failed to provide safety to the minority population, and in many cases, supported the Hindu mobs that were engaging in violence. These communal riots resulted in over 50 deaths and 200 injuries, with over 75% of the fatalities being Muslims (Ellis-Petersen and Azizur 2020).

In the case of Delhi riots, one of the monumental securitizing actors was a BJP leader, Kapil Mishra. On 23rd February, he publicly made a provocative ultimatum that if the police did not dissolve the protests that were taking place against the new citizenship laws, then his followers will be "forced to hit the streets" (Twitter 2020). According to reports, Mishra had started to gather Hindu young men to act against the Muslims on the morning of 24th February. The witness stated that there were explicit commands to capture and kill any Muslims in sight (Ellis-Petersen and Azizur 2020). Another Hindu, a priest, in the state of Bihar recalled a story of a similar vein, in which Hindu mobs brandished weapons openly as they marched to attack Muslims. The priest mentioned a young man with a gun who was shouting, "Brothers, we are on a mission in the interest of our nation. Our [BJP] leaders have given the call to come out in the open... There is nothing to worry about. Join us and increase our strength" (Ellis-Petersen and Azizur 2020). In one mobile footage, the police demonstrated their anti-Muslim sentiment by brutally beating five innocent Muslims and then forcing them to sing the national anthem to show their "loyalty" to India (Ellis-Petersen and Azizur 2020).

The idea of Muslims and their questionable loyalty has semblance in another tweet by Mishra in which he equated the Delhi assembly elections as a fight between India and Pakistan (Twitter 2020). The tweet was later taken down by the Election Commission of India on the grounds that it triggered existing tensions between communities (The Statesman 2020). By categorizing the opposition parties as well as critics of the BJP and their citizenship laws as Pakistan, he is implying that they are anti-nationals, which is in contrast to the "patriotic"

Figure 1. Narendra Modi mentions Hindu gods in the governance of India in a tweet.

(taken from Twitter)



Figure 2. Narendra Modi expresses his pride in Hindu traditions in a tweet.

(taken from Twitter)

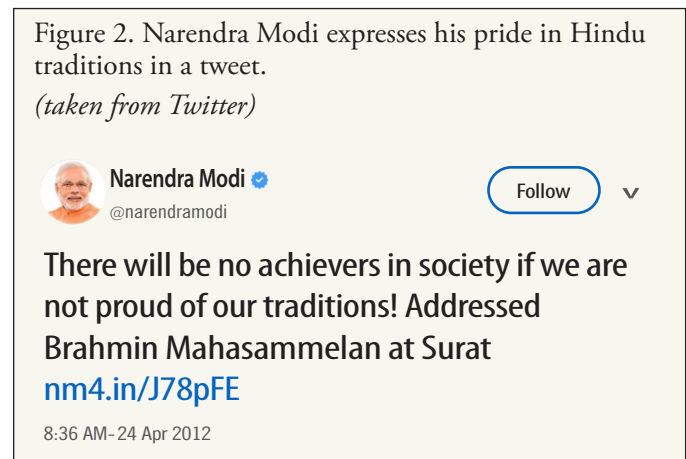


Figure 3. A tweet by BJP official, Shobha Karandlaje, claiming that the opposition is turning India into an Islamic Republic.

(taken from Twitter)



BJP supporters. Since Pakistan and India have had consistent security struggles, he makes a securitizing move through which he aims to cast any opposition as a security concern. Those who do not support the BJP are a threat to India or the Hindu nation. Further, as figure 3 shows, other BJP officials too have run their campaign on the threat the Hindu community faces and how the BJP will be a reliable form of protection to the increasingly marginalized Hindus (Twitter 2018).

Afterwards, when Mishra garnered criticism for what many claimed to be an incendiary speech, he again took to Twitter to victimize himself and frame the opposition and criticism as being part of a “hate campaign” (Twitter 2020). This Twitter post got a lot of support from many members of the Hindu community with some examples of comments being as follows:

- “Kapil Mishra will be the next CM [Chief Minister] of Delhi. He raised his voice for Hindu brothers, such people are very few, we should not lose such people. I want to strengthen the hands of Kapil Mishra and I request all of you to also support him.”
- “Is preventing another road from getting blocked hate?”
- “Nation wants to know what #Kapil_Mishra did which is against law? Is it crime to say that don't block public road? #CAA is not against any Indian citizen then why r u opposing it?”
- “Call it as it is Anti-Hindu Riots, 2020.”
- “The man who stood for right cause but framed in wrong action. He didn't incite riots. It's their intolerance that started pelting stones” (Twitter 2020).

The comments above imply that the Delhi riots was a ploy staged by the opposition to make the party in power, the BJP, look bad. They highlight the perceived threat of marginalization that many Hindus possess, and how they consider the securitizing actor to be their champion for protecting their referent object. These replies on Twitter demonstrate how many Hindus fail to see the contentiousness of the new citizenship laws, as well as the violence being propagated against minorities. They buy into the securitizing moves of the securitizing actors to not only imagine a sense of threat but also dismiss and disregard any possibility of threat that “the other” might be facing. The securitizing moves are quite successful in cases in which members of the Hindu community interpret the same set of events in a way that confirms the subjective sense of threat that the securitizing actor has highlighted. In one comment, a tweeter claims it to be “Anti-Hindu Riots 2020” even though the violence committed against Muslims was overwhelmingly greater with fewer, scattered instances of violence against Hindus. Again, members of the Hindu community are perceiving the intolerance of the Muslims to be the cause of the riots. This can also be connected to the wider stereotypical narrative that is produced regarding militant Islam and Islam's intolerance.

Cow Protection

Party members of the BJP have made use of striking communal rhetoric that clearly constructs the narrative of Indian nationhood along religious lines. As the Hindu tradition worships cows and forbids its consumption, many BJP members have made speech acts on the topic of cow protection, which has manifested in the dramatic increase in violent cow protection campaigns against those who eat or sell beef. According to a report published by the Human Rights Watch published earlier this year in February, there have been 100 different cases over 20 states in which approximately 280 people have been injured and 44 left dead. These cow vigilante groups have associations with Hindu nationalist groups which in turn are linked to the BJP. The victims are usually Muslim groups and other backward castes and tribes (Bajoria 2019).

Here are some examples of speeches made by elected BJP members that can be interpreted as securitizing moves that fuel the party's communal rhetoric to advance crimes against those engaged in beef consumption or sales.

- “There is only one way to protect Indian culture: to protect gau (cows), Ganga, and (goddess) Gayatri... Only the community that can protect this heritage will survive. Otherwise there will be a huge crisis of identity, and this crisis of identity will endanger our existence.” –Adityanath, BJP chief minister, Uttar Pradesh state, November 2017 (Bajoria 2019).

In the above, the securitizing actor is a BJP chief minister of the Indian state which reports the highest numbers of communal violence and his speech is defining Indian culture

strictly in terms of the Hindu religion (Economic Times 2018). Through this speech or the securitizing move, he is bringing the Hindu community's attention to the supposed threat that is being posed to their referent object, Hindu nation, which is being symbolized by the cow, the river Ganga, and the goddess Gayatri, all of which are considered sacred in Hinduism. The source of threat is from those who eat or kill cows—the Muslim community. By wording it as a “crisis of identity” that will “endanger our existence”, the securitizing actor constructs it to be a matter of security concern because of how it poses an existential threat to the Hindu community. This securitizing move thus aims to create a justification for any crimes against Muslims as these policies or hate acts would be a result of protection of the Hindu nation.

- “Till cow is not accorded the status of ‘Rashtra Mata’ [Mother of the Nation] I feel the war for gau raksha [cow protection] will not stop even if gau rakshaks [cow protectors] are put into jails or bullets are fired at them.” –T Raja Singh Lodh, BJP lawmaker, Telangana state, July 2018 (Bajoria 2019).

Here the securitizing actor identifies the referent object as the Hindu nation as it is symbolized by the cow. By framing the protection of cows as a “war”, he underscores the security threat faced by the Hindu community. Further, not only does he normalize the act of criminalizing or shooting the source of the threat but also deems it to be an inadequate security measure.

- “Those who are dying without eating beef, can go to Pakistan or Arab countries or any other part of the world where it is available.” –Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, BJP union minister of state for parliamentary affairs, May 2015 (Bajoria 2019).

Here, the BJP minister is a securitizing actor who casts anyone who doesn't follow ideals of Hinduism, regardless of their religion, as a foreigner who would belong better in an Islamic country. This shows how the narrative of the Indian nation is defined along religious lines and is only limited to those who follow religious rules as they conform to Hinduism. The conflation of a particular religion with the Indian nation construes Muslims as “the other” who deserve to be thrown out if they do not abide by rules of a Hindu nation.

- “We won't remain silent if somebody tries to kill our mother. We are ready to kill and be killed.” –Sakshi Maharaj, BJP member of parliament, on the killing of Mohammad Akhlaq, October 2015 (Bajoria 2019).

This securitizing actor is again justifying the violent action taken by cow vigilante groups on Muslims who have engaged in beef consumption and sales through this securitizing move. He identifies “our mother” as the referent object—the Hindu nation and that any threat posed to the referent object deserves a murderous response.

- “We will hang those who kill cows. –Raman Singh, BJP chief minister, Chhattisgarh state, April 2017 (Bajoria 2019).
- “I had promised that I will break the hands and legs of those who do not consider cows their mother and kill them.” –Vikram Saini, BJP lawmaker, Uttar Pradesh state, March 2017 (Bajoria 2019).

The above two examples are also securitizing moves made by securitizing actors through speeches in which they explicitly declare that they will undertake violence against those who supposedly weaken the Hindu community's referent object—the Hindu nation— as symbolized by cows. These fiery statements also serve to give a green signal to other members of the Hindu community to commit acts of violence against the threatening Muslims.

Cow protection has also had policy implications. The Haryana government instituted a 24-hour ‘helpline’ in 2016 where people could lodge complaints regarding cow slaughter and trade as well as staffed police officials to take care of those reports. In Uttar Pradesh, the BJP chief minister, Adityanath, closed butcher houses and meat shops owned by Muslims right after coming to power in 2017 (Bajoria 2019). This goes on to demonstrate the importance occupied by cow protection in the agenda of BJP chief ministers. In a tragic incident in April of 2017, an old dairy farmer from Rajasthan, Pehlu Khan, along with four others, was severely beaten up with belts and sticks by a group of Hindus. His purchase receipts of the cattle were supposedly destroyed in front of him (Bajoria 2019). Even when this violent attack resulted in the death of Pehlu Khan, the home minister of Rajasthan put the onus on the deceased by arguing,

“People know cow trafficking is illegal, but they do it. Gau bhakts [cow worshippers] try to stop them. There's nothing wrong with that” (Bajoria 2019).

Another official from the BJP said, *“We should not take law into our hands. But we have no regret over his death [Pehlu Khan] because those who are cow smugglers are cow-killers; sinners like them have met this fate earlier and will continue to do so.”* –Gyan Dev Ahuja, BJP lawmaker, Rajasthan state, April 2017” (Bajoria 2019).

In this example too, the securitizing actor makes the securitizing move of making this statement that expresses a lack of remorse over the death of a Muslim as a result of cow-lynching. Further, his securitizing move creates a foreboding sense of promise that Muslims who threaten the Hindu nation by killing cows are sinning and may very well face violence or death and that it would be completely justified.

The prominence of cow protection was further underscored when the state of Gujarat modified its laws to punish the killing of cows or bulls with increased charges and life imprisonment in 2017. The home minister of Gujarat, Pradeepsinh Jadeja was recorded saying, *“We have equaled the killing of a cow or cow progeny with the killing of a human being”*

(Bajoria 2019). Since the BJP came to power in 2014, cows have been elevated to the status of a human being whereas the minority Muslims have been dehumanized to occupy a lower status in Indian society. The Cow has been awarded such a valuable symbol for the Hindu nation that its killing warrants the killing of Muslims.

Evaluation of the Success of Securitizing Moves made against Muslims

Securitizing moves can be successful or unsuccessful depending on whether the community they aim to appeal to accepts or rejects the moves by the securitizing actors. Some securitizing moves have been wildly successful in that they were accepted by a wide section of society to rise up and engage in extraordinary measures. The speech acts made by leaders from the BJP and other Hindu nationalist groups were extremely successful in the case of the Babri Masjid demolition. Similarly, the securitizing move to utilize the narrative of the Hindu epic of *Ramayana* was immensely effective as it proved to be a catalyst in a process that resulted in the destruction of a mosque. Narendra Modi's use of symbols and his explicit securitizing moves in the case of the Gujarat riots only added to his popularity among his Hindu supporters. They regarded him as a reliable champion of Hindu rights and protection.

Some other securitizing moves, on the other hand, witnessed less popularity. For example, opinions regarding the Kashmir lockdown were more divided. Liberals, human rights groups and international organizations criticized the move because of the human rights abuses inflicted on Kashmiri people by the deployed army. Many have even challenged the legality of the Kashmir lockdown (The Guardian 2019). However, a lot of Modi supporters believe this measure to be rightful as it serves to undo the unfair privileges bestowed upon Kashmiris, the majority of whom are Muslims. Supporters justify the violence committed during the Delhi riots by instead citing the violence faced by Hindu Kashmiri Pandits. Thus, Modi's measures have been successful among his support base.

Some of the securitizing moves are still ongoing and in flux. The moves to justify and implement the CAA and NRC were embraced by Modi supporters while strongly rejected by more liberal sections of the Indian society. Those in disagreement with the laws took to the streets to protest. However, these protests and demonstrations were halted as a result of the lockdown imposed by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The implementation of the two controversial laws was also indirectly responsible for giving rise to the 2020 Delhi Riots. While the securitizing moves leading up to the Delhi Riots were successful in inciting mobs of Hindus to attack Muslim communities, the securitizing actor, Kapil Mishra, was also met with a lot of criticism. However, as previously outlined in examples of comments on his Twitter posts, Mishra also had a lot of sympathizers who framed him to be the victim falsely accused.

Hindu Nationalism and the Demands of Subordinate Castes

Along with the projection of Muslims as a threat to the Hindu nation, the political demands of lower castes and the variations from a strident unified identity constructed by Hindu nationalists are also framed as anti-national and threats to the nation. The ideology of Hindutva rests on a monolithic Hindu identity, and the TV serialized *Ramayana* and religious symbols utilized during the Babri Masjid demolition attempted to mobilize the Hindu community under a homogenous Hindu identity. The BJP government has utilized security moves like censorship in the wake of dissent by non-upper caste Hindus and divergences from mainstream Hindu traditions (Sen 2019). The Modi government, which relies heavily on the upper-caste Hindu vote, has not only painted Muslims as a threat to the supposed Hindu nation, but also other lower-caste Hindus who do not conform to the monolithic Hindu narrative (Economic and Political Weekly, 2013).

CONCLUSION

For four decades now, securitizing actors, who are mostly members of Hindu nationalist groups and the current political party in power, the BJP, have tried to underscore a supposed threat that the Hindu community and its Hindu nation face from the minority group of Muslims. The findings demonstrate how these actors have been making securitizing moves that distort and appropriate history, advance certain historical myths more than others, and rely on monolithic Hindu symbols to mobilize the support of the Hindu community. This helps these actors gather the support of Hindus on the basis of a more homogenous Hindu religion while also enhancing the subjective sense of threat to the cherished Hindu nation that the Hindu community faces. The securitizing moves consist of speech acts made at political rallies and on internet mediums like Twitter aiming to victimize the Hindu community. The supposed existential threat posed on the Hindu community's status and survival then serves to justify the controversial policy measures that these actors undertake while maintaining the support of the Hindu community.

The literature review delineated some of the reasons for communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India. Scholars have looked at the primordial belief that India has always consisted of Hindu characteristics and Islam has been regarded as a foreign element to India. They have also highlighted how the primordial approach to nationhood perceives one's own nation to be superior to others. Other scholars mention the way Western powers construct knowledge about the Orient that helps them dominate it. Some scholars underscore the importance of everyday practices and routines that churn out feelings of patriotism. This paper's thesis aligned with the work of these previous scholars. This research looked at how the narrative of *Rama Janmabhoomi* in the case of the Babri Masjid demolition was used to glorify ancient Hindu

traditions and myths, as well as to cast Islam as a foreign religion that had taken over Hindu land. This article also looked at how the British conveniently simplified India to be a land of mutually hostile religious groups in an effort to rule it better. This oversimplification was used by Hindu nationalist groups to advance their ideology of a Hindu nationhood. Additionally, this article focused on how a key securitizing actor like Narendra Modi is making use of everyday symbols that relate to Hinduism to normalize patriotism. The BJP is also indulging in the glorification of traditional Hindu practices in an effort to increase Hindus' sense of pride and identity to then mobilize them to create a Hindu nation.

This article's approach adds a security dimension to the work of previous scholars. It also takes the recent instances of intergroup conflict into account to help explain how the increase in tensions are a result of the narratives of Indian nationhood being drawn along religious lines. This work's thesis suggests that the very meaning of India that founding members had envisioned is being challenged. The increasing political representation of the BJP and the increase in intergroup violence after BJP came to power pose a threat to the very ideals on which the Indian nation was constructed. Furthermore, it also demonstrates that the literature and the different approaches to nationalism are still very relevant. In particular, religion is constituting a huge theme in the direction that Indian nationalism is taking. Regardless of these findings, the securitizing moves made by securitizing actors aren't blindly being accepted by all Hindus or all of the Indian society. There has been a pushback in terms of protests and demonstrations, social media and global criticism.

This research sheds useful light on the tactics adopted by some key actors in the Indian society that help them construct a narrative that makes the dominant upper-caste factions of the Hindu religious group appear to be under threat in an attempt to justify extraordinary policy measures and violations of human rights. However, this article's thesis does not take the other side of the story in account. For example, some Muslim leaders in the Indian society are engaging in counter-securitizing moves that then bring the Muslim community's attention to the threats posed to their religious group by Hindus. Recently, the President of the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), Asaddudin Owaisi, chanted the Islamic religious line of "Allahu Akbar" when taking oath in the Indian Parliament in June of 2019. This was in direct response to the chants of "*Jai Shri Ram*" and "*Vande Mataram*" by Hindi members of the Parliament as they took oath in the office (India Tribune 2018). Furthermore, student communities in Leftist university of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and the Muslim majority Jamia Milia Islamia University have also been engaging in securitizing moves that aim to mobilize Muslims based on the threat and alienation they face in the hands of the BJP and other Hindu nationalist groups.

Future research can also try and zoom into the other side of the story and identify how members of the Muslim

community in India are crucial securitizing actors making securitizing moves that alert Muslim community to the threat it faces in India. This future research would add dimension to this article by showcasing how Muslim and other non-Hindu nationalist security actors are further depending Hindu-Muslim cleavages.

Further, while this paper's constructivist approach is dynamic and flexible, other approaches can help shed new light on the conflict between Hindus and Muslims. For example, future research can draw from Social- and Political Psychology to carry out experimental research that tests concepts like intergroup relations theory, minimal group paradigm, dominant group theory, social identity theory, in-group favoritism, out-group resentment, ethnocentrism, explicit biases, and implicit biases. This may provide better insights into how a huge part of the Hindu-Muslim conflict is based on psychological and cognitive categorization. It would also highlight the psychological reasons why securitizing actors were able to appeal to the psyche of the Hindu community to trigger their in-group favoritism and ethnocentrism. Future research should also adopt a postmodernist approach to look at how those in power, like the BJP, are constructing knowledge about the Indian society in a way that helps them maintain Hindu support. Another limitation of the security paradigm is the way it frames every political issue to be a security issue. However, some securitizing moves made by the BJP are motivated by political reasons and electoral incentives like securing the vote bank of Hindus.

Moreover, future research can also focus on the rise of an international consciousness and how that affects the Hindu-Muslim conflict in India. Narendra Modi has gained popularity among Hindu nationalist groups because of the tough stance that he has exhibited towards Pakistan. Hence, future research can evaluate the role of external actors like Pakistan in informing the domestic security issue of Hindus and Muslims in India. ■

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