

MANUFACTURING CONSENT FOR A HINDU RASHTRA:
FALSE FLAG OPERATIONS AND STRATEGIC USE OF
MEDIA IN MODI'S INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the ideological transformation of India under the rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which is driven by the Hindu-supremacist agenda of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its political wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). It contends that the BJP-RSS nexus is consolidating political power as a calculated plan to attain a Hindu Rashtra as a part of its Hindutva ideology. The use of false flag operations, media control and ideological programming are central to this project. The study has drawn a parallel between Modi and Hitler on the basis of these tactics. The paper points towards how the association of Modi with the RSS has facilitated a weakening of democratic institutions, oppression of minorities, and re-conceptualisation of Indian nationalism. The paper also discusses regional consequences of Hindutva ideology especially its hostile attitude towards Pakistan that escalates instability in South Asia. By critically reviewing literature and recent events, the paper places Modi India in the context of the global wave of majoritarian authoritarianism spearheaded by digital propaganda and ideological spectacle.

Keywords: Hindutva, Narendra Modi, RSS, BJP, media manipulation, false flag operations, *Hindu Rashtra*, South Asia geopolitics

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 2010s, the world has been observing a rapid political and ideological transformation in India. The core of this change is the rise of the BJP to political power under the leadership of Narendra Modi. The driving purpose of BJP is the fulfilment of *Hindutva*, (ideological foundation of Hindu nationalism). The BJP-Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) nexus has been tirelessly engaged in the consolidation of political power in India and establishing ideological legitimacy for their exclusionary and expansionist objectives. In a bid to attain this goal, Prime Minister Modi's regime has used several strategies.

To analyse the trajectory of the Indian state under BJP, it is important to look at the RSS and the ideological brainwashing of Narendra Modi. The RSS is a Hindu-supremacist group that was set up by Hindu nationalists in the British colonial period as a cultural movement. The organisation recruits and brainwashes people to spread Hindutva ideals, such as the formation of a homogenous Hindu state and then expansion of territory for the establishment of *Akhand Bharat*¹ (geopolitical goal of Hindutva i.e. the reunification of Indian subcontinent, including Present-day India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Parts of Myanmar and Tibet to form a homogenous Hindu supremacist nation-state).

PM Modi formally became an RSS member in 1971, but his original involvement with the group dates back to 1958 when he was just about seven years old.² Ideological indoctrination over the years has turned Modi into a radical Hindu

¹ Doreen Chowdhury, "BJP's 'Akhand Bharat' Dream Is Not Only Problematic, Fascist Also," *Modern Diplomacy*, September 29, 2022, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2022/09/30/bjps-akhand-bharat-dream-is-not-only-problematic-fascist-also>.

² Meena Yeggina, "Revolt of the Social Intellectual," *India Parent Magazine*, 2015, <https://www.indiaparentmagazine.org/article/revolt-of-the-social-intellectual.php>.

supremacist who believes that his ambitions are legitimate and noble. In order to further BJP's ideological agenda, PM Modi's regime has increasingly centralised and consolidated power in India, leading to the erosion of all democratic principles and institutions. The regime has taken complete control of the education curricula, state institutions, and media in order to propagate its ideology. This is being done to strategically transform India into a radical Hindu nationalist state, a necessary precondition towards the achievement of Hindutva.

Over the past few years, Modi has used false flag operations and media manipulation to manufacture consent for Hindutva ideology by labelling minorities as threats.³ The timing of false flag attacks and their coverage by *Godi* media (media outlets controlled by the Modi government) clearly reveal that the intent behind these attacks is to consolidate nationalist narrative. It is necessary to mention that RSS and BJP are extremely proficient in ideological indoctrination, which is why they have a cult-like following in India. They utilise Indian media, which is already trained in crafts like exaggeration, sentimentalism and sensationalism.⁴ First, Bollywood films such as *The Kashmir Files* (2022) and *The Kerala Story* (2023) stereotyped Muslims and Pakistanis in the name of entertainment. However, the same strategies are now being embraced by many mainstream Indian news channels.

The adoption of Hindutva policies has led to the erosion of civil liberties, increased surveillance and the marginalisation of Muslims and dissenters within India.⁵

³ Abdul Qadir, "From Propaganda to False Flags," *The Nation*, August 3, 2024, <https://www.nation.com.pk/03-Aug-2024/from-propaganda-to-false-flags>.

⁴ Rana Ayyub, "What a Decade of Reporting on India's Narendra Modi Taught Me," *Time*, May 24, 2019, <https://time.com/5595576/modi-victory-hindu-nationalism/>.

⁵ Sophie Landrin and Carole Dieterich, "Modi Hunts down His 'Internal Enemies' within India's Civil Society," *Le Monde.fr* (Le Monde, March 17, 2024), https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/03/17/modi-hunts-down-his-internal-enemies-within-india-s-civil-society_6628934_4.html.

Under the Modi regime, several separatist movements in India have gained traction. The Khalistan movement in particular has gained momentum over the last few years.⁶ Indian ideological machinery also has far-reaching implications for the entire South Asian region, particularly Pakistan. Modi has aggravated territorial tensions with Pakistan, and rationalised aggressive posturing as an expression of Hindu assertiveness. Such dynamics are not accidental but are the intentional results of a grand ideological program.

The paper will argue that strategies like false flag operations against Pakistan and media manipulation in Modi's India are not merely a tool of political convenience but a key step in the creation of a *Hindu Rashtra* (a majoritarian Hindu nation-state governed by Hindu rules). By the careful deployment of fear, spectacle, and propaganda, the leadership of the BJP-RSS nexus has created a regime whereby political authority is not wielded in the service of democracy but instead to redefine India as an exclusionary, majoritarian state.

1.1. Research Questions

This research is guided by the following research questions:

1. How does Narendra Modi's ideological alignment with the RSS shape the use of political power to advance the long-term goal of establishing a *Hindu Rashtra*?

⁶ Web Desk, "Indian Media Warns BJP Anti-Minorities Policies to Push Country into Division as Khalistan Movement Gain Momentum," *Thesouthasiatimes.com*, 2025, <https://thesouthasiatimes.com/story/india-khalistan-theHindu>.

2. In what ways do false flag operations, coupled with media manipulation, function as tools for manufacturing public consent and consolidating political power in service of Hindutva ideology?
3. What are the regional and geopolitical consequences of the Modi's Hindutva-driven strategy?

1.2. Hypothesis

In Modi's India, false flag operations and media manipulation are systematically employed to manufacture consent for Hindutva. This is done by creating a false climate of fear, externalising threats (particularly Pakistan and Muslims), and justifying authoritarian governance under the guise of national security.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

The paper uses two major theoretical frameworks: Propaganda Model by Herman and Chomsky and Social Identity Theory. These two frameworks describe the process of producing mass consent for BJP's Hindutva project in India.

The Propaganda Model describes five filters, namely ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak and dominant ideology, through which media content is moulded in a way that suits the interests of the elite. In India, these filters work via state media like Republic TV, Zee News and Times Group, which peddle narratives that are beneficial to the BJP-RSS ideological complex. The ideology of anti-communism that prevailed in the Cold War America has been substituted in India with Islamophobia and ultra-nationalism. This hegemonic filter re-contextualises dissent as anti-national and Indian Muslims and Pakistan as existential threats to warrant state violence and authoritarianism in the name of national security. The construction of "good Muslim" and "bad Muslim" is used to make Indian Muslims conform to Hindu cultural norms

and accept Hindu hegemony. Otherwise, they are portrayed as threats. This discursive division legitimises discrimination and deepens the securitisation of Muslim identity under the guise of protecting national unity.

A supplement to this structural analysis is the Social Identity Theory, which describes the psychological processes of group solidarity and hostility towards the out-group. According to this theory, people get some of their identity through group memberships and are driven to have a favourable in-group image. In the case of Modi's India, the Hindu identity is presented as being under an existential threat. This fear contributes towards in-group cohesion among Indian Hindus. At the same time, the group becomes more hostile against Muslims, who are constructed as the "others". This feeling increases the endorsement of authoritarian policies that include surveillance, censorship, and legal discrimination under the false pretexts of 'defence'. These group identity dynamics are mobilised repeatedly by invocation of threats, which is achieved with the help of false flag operations, and media disinformation.

Combined, these two frameworks enable a holistic study of how state-aligned media discourses and identity politics are deployed strategically by the Modi regime to legitimise Hindutva ideology, consolidate political power, and suppress dissent.

1.4. Research Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative research methodology and an interdisciplinary approach while exploring the way in which propaganda, ideological instruments, and media tactics are employed by the Modi-led BJP-RSS regime to advance the Hindutva project. The study uses both primary and secondary data to examine how manufacturing consent, moulding of the social perception and the consolidation of political power work.

This paper uses both primary and secondary sources to identify the historical trajectory of Hindutva and the role of the media as a political instrument. Academic books, peer-reviewed articles, investigative journalism, policy papers, and media content were reviewed and interviews were conducted. Dr. Salma Malik, a South Asian Affairs expert and Associate Professor at the Department of Defence and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, will be henceforth mentioned as interviewee 1.

The data is analysed and the repeated patterns are identified in the expert narratives and existing literature. The research is focused on India under the BJP government headed by PM Narendra Modi. Although it is difficult to verify the claims of false flag operations and covert propaganda activities directly, triangulation by means of interviews, media research, and academic studies can be used to make informed conclusions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Hindutva is based on 20th century writings of Savarkar, who viewed India as a Hindu nation-state and rejected any form of secularism or pluralism.⁷ The RSS adopted and institutionalised Hindutva. Christophe Jaffrelot has traced the development of Hindutva from its ideological roots in Savarkar and Golwalkar to its strategic infiltration of the Indian state under Modi. He maintains that RSS is not only a cultural movement but also a cadre building organisation which disciplines people into an ideologically consistent Hindu nationalist worldview.⁸ The RSS: A View to the

⁷ Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, *Essentials of Hindutva* (1921; repr., New Delhi, India: Global Vision Publishing House, 2021),

https://savarkar.org/en/encyc/2017/5/23/2_12_12_04_essentials_of_hindutva.v001.pdf_1.pdf.

⁸ Christophe Jaffrelot, *Hindu Nationalism: A Reader* (2025; repr., Ranikhet, Cantt Permanent Black, 2009).

Inside records how the Sangh Parivar (the BJP-RSS nexus) achieves ideological consistency among its affiliates.

As a product of RSS indoctrination, PM Modi is the living embodiment of the ideals of the RSS: ascetic, subservient, and ideologically intransigent. In his analysis of PM Modi's political rise, Jaffrelot focuses on the fact that the Indian Premier's cult is based on the RSS idea of discipline and authoritarian leadership. He describes Modi as an exemplar of an ethnic democrat who marries procedural electoral legitimacy with institutionalised exclusion of the minorities and opposition.⁹ PM Modi's biography by Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay follows how Modi was able to rise to power through his manipulation of crises, most notably the Gujarat riots of 2002, and his development of a populist, masculine, and development-focused image.¹⁰

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's book *Manufacturing Consent* can be used to study Modi regime's success in popularising Hindutva among Indian Hindus. The Indian state has used media to mainstream Hindutva. Tyagi et al. (2020) have shown, through research, that there is political manipulation on social media during elections.¹¹ BJP politicians used polarised hashtags and conflict language after the Pulwama attack, which increased tensions between India and Pakistan.

According to Subhash Gatade (2019), false flag operations, coupled with media manipulation, propagate Hindutva by creating an illusion of an external enemy i.e., Indian Muslims and Pakistan.¹² The digital era has extended the scope of this

⁹ Christophe Jaffrelot and Cynthia Schoch, *Modi's India : Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021).

¹⁰ Nilanjan Mukhopadhyay, *Narendra Modi: The Man, the Times* (Tranquebar, 2014).

¹¹ Aman Tyagi et al., "A Computational Analysis of Polarization on Indian and Pakistani Social Media," in *Social Informatics*, vol. 12467, 7AD, 364–79.

¹² Subhash Gatade, *Hindutva's Second Coming* (Media House , 2019).

ideological project by means of Fifth-Generation Warfare (5GW), which focuses on the psychological impact and information superiority rather than the use of force. Such attempts are closely connected to the electoral strategy, as digital propaganda supports the idea of the BJP as the only saviour of the Hindu civilisation against internal traitors and external enemies.¹³ Within this post-truth context, it is possible to disseminate false flag narratives so that they become established in time before crucial information becomes available, thus securing citizen backing of retaliatory or repressive state measures.

The demonisation of dissenting Muslim voices is also used to manufacture consent for Hindutva. The cases of journalist Mohammad Zubair, co-founder of Alt News, and investigative reporter Rana Ayyub, highlight this point. Indian state agencies and Godi media have targeted both. Zubair was arrested for fact-checking communal disinformation while Ayyub was harassed and persecuted in the court of law for his coverage of anti-Muslims violence. Their treatment is indicative of the propaganda machine that equates dissent to anti-nationalism.

Such a tactical combination of ideology and propaganda has far-reaching implications for Pakistan. The regional outlook of Hindutva, and in particular, the myth of *Akhand Bharat*, intensifies the conflict with Pakistan and negates the chances of peace in the subcontinent. The way Hindutva has constructed Pakistan as the eternal enemy is not just rhetoric but manifests itself in India's defence and foreign policy.

The literature, therefore, indicates a strategic, well-orchestrated conversion of Indian democracy into a majoritarian and ideologically rigid state. The ideological

¹³ Aqeel Ahmad Gichki, *The Role of Media in the Fifth Generation Warfare: The Indian Information War against Pakistan*, 2022.

compatibility of Modi with the RSS allows the perfect integration of personality cult, nationalist mythology, and technocratic rule that is controlled and engineered through media control and narrative engineering. False flag operations are not aberrations but seem to be part of a bigger political plan of manufacturing consent for a *Hindu Rashtra*, one at the expense of pluralism, civil liberties, and regional peace in the name of ideological coherence.

While there is a rich literature on Hindutva nationalism, media propaganda, and India-Pakistan relations, few studies explicitly connect false flag operations with the systematic manufacture of consent for Hindutva nationalism using the Propaganda Model framework. Most works treat security incidents as isolated events or focus on electoral impacts without adequately analysing the nexus of media ownership, state strategy, digital misinformation, and ideological consolidation. Furthermore, emerging scholarship on 5GW and digital propaganda is fragmented and underapplied in the South Asian context, particularly concerning the strategic role of false flag operations in contemporary Indian politics.

This study aims to fill one of these gaps by synthesising multiple strands—media, digital misinformation, Hindutva nationalism, and false flag tactics—into a cohesive analytical framework. It advances understanding of how false flag operations are deliberately leveraged to manufacture consent for an aggressive Hindutva agenda, consolidating political power and marginalising dissent.

3. THE RISE OF HINDUTVA UNDER MODI

The ideological transformation of India under PM Narendra Modi cannot be studied in isolation from the institutional and doctrinal origins of the RSS. The RSS was founded in 1925 and envisaged the creation of a culturally unified Hindu nation,

a *Hindu Rashtra* as a redress to centuries of rule by Muslims. It is based on historical grievance, cultural revivalism, and religious majoritarianism.¹⁴ The RSS implements its doctrine in the form of *shakhas* (neighbourhood meetings in which young Hindu boys are indoctrinated with ideology).

3.1. Modi as a Product of RSS

Having joined the RSS at the age of seven, Modi started a lifelong process of ideological programming. As he rose to be a *pracharak* (full-time worker), Modi imbibed the RSS ideology, such as Hindu superiority and contempt of pluralism. So complete is his devotion to Hindutva and the RSS that he has no family of his own and presents himself as the living embodiment of the Hindu nation.¹⁵ His personal life, political decisions and policies reflect decades of indoctrination in a religious-nationalist discourse that presents Indian secularism as a distortion of India's true civilisational identity: Hinduism.

3.2 The Transformation of BJP under Modi's Leadership

Since Modi came to power, the BJP has transformed itself into a Hindu nationalist political party. Though historically communal, the BJP previously existed within the boundaries of the constitutional secularism in India, but all this changed with the rise of Modi. This is evident in both legislative and symbolic steps taken by the Modi government. The abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, the passing of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act 2021, and the Waqf amendment Act 2024-25 reflect BJP's tendency for Hinduisation

¹⁴ Walter Andersen and Shridhar D Damle, *Messengers of Hindu Nationalism : How the RSS Reshaped India* (2025; repr., London: C. Hurst & Co, (Publishers) Ltd, 2019).

¹⁵ Andrew North, "Narendra Modi Keeps Family and Hometown at Arm's Length," *BBC News*, May 16, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-27433277?>.

of India's legal architecture. These steps mark the redefinition of the Indian state as a civilisational project, changing it from a democratic republic to a cultural autocracy.

3.3 Social Identity Theory and the Politics of Exclusion

According to Social Identity theory, people get a sense of self through group affiliation, and intergroup relations tend to be influenced by in-group favouritism and out-group hostility.¹⁶ The Modi regime has used this binary construction by building an existential siege discourse on Hindu identity. The in-group, the Hindus, is depicted as the historically oppressed and currently threatened by others: the Indian Muslims, the secularists, the leftists, and Pakistan.

This enables the regime to create a world where repression is seen as sanctity and authoritarian policies are presented as self-defence in the form of lynchings in the name of cow protection, imprisonment of dissenters, and the labelling of civil society members as anti-national.¹⁷ The Indian civil society and the institutions that supported and somewhat protected democratic norms and traditions have become weakened and subdued over the past years, owing to regime's punitive and ultra nationalist attitude.¹⁸

The fear and grievance invoked through various tools, such a false flag operations and media propaganda, unites the in-group and justifies the marginalisation of the Indian Muslims and aggression against Pakistan.

¹⁶ Saul McLeod, "Social Identity Theory in Psychology," *Simply Psychology*, October 5, 2023, <https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html>.

¹⁷ Isaac Chotiner, "Has Modi Pushed Indian Democracy Past Its Breaking Point?," *The New Yorker*, March 31, 2023, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/q-and-a/has-modi-pushed-indian-democracy-past-its-breaking-point>.

¹⁸ Interviewee 1

3.4 Authoritarian Parallels: Modi and Hitler in the Politics of Fear and Mythology

This ideological engineering approach of Modi presents disturbing similarities to Nazi Germany under Hitler. Like Hitler, PM Modi is integrating nationalism, myth-making, and exclusion based on identity to centralise authority. At the heart of both these regimes is a personality cult which is built by propaganda and spectacle. While Hitler promised a renewed Aryan Germany, Modi talks about restoring Hindu supremacy.¹⁹

In Nazi Germany, Goebbels media had crafted a glorified image of Hitler.²⁰ In India too, Modi controls the political discourse on media. Another important similarity is the manufacturing of crisis. The Reichstag Fire of 1933 allowed Hitler to criminalise political opponents and centralise power.²¹ In India, false flag operations are carried out to create national hysteria, marginalise dissenters, and securitise the Indian Muslims as well as Pakistan as enemies. Modi's control mechanisms of media capture, enemy construction, and mythologised leadership are the historical authoritarian playbooks. The comparisons need to be approached critically not to draw parallels but to understand the warning signs of history.

3.5 The Blurring of State, Party and Religion

With PM Modi, the boundary between the state, the party and religious ideology has vanished. The RSS no longer lives on the ideological fringes; it is now enshrined

¹⁹ "Building a Cult: Hitler and Modi," *Justice for All*, accessed June 7, 2025, <https://www.justiceforall.org/indiannazis-report/building-a-cult-hitler-and-modi/>.

²⁰ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "Joseph Goebbels," *Ushmm.org*, December 18, 2019, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/joseph-goebbels-1>.

²¹ Lily Rothman, "Who Started the Reichstag Fire?," *Time*, February 27, 2015, <https://time.com/3717003/reichstag-fire-1933/>.

in state institutions, policymaking committees, educational boards and bureaucratic training programmes. RSS-associated workshops are attended by civil servants; textbooks are rewritten to celebrate Hindu kings and to forget the contribution of the Mughals. The electoral mandate is not only applied to rule but also to re-orient the historical memory and the future of the country.

4. MEDIA AS AN INSTRUMENT OF HINDUTVA

Media acts as a watchdog in a well-functioning democracy. In India, it has become an instrument of ideological indoctrination. Based on the Propaganda Model presented by Herman and Chomsky, the role of media in India can be understood as a means of manufacturing consent to Hindutva by filtering the information through five filters, namely, ownership, advertising, sourcing, flak, and ideology. Indian media has become the main voice to forward hardliner agenda and maintain an ultra-nationalistic sale pitch, acting as judge and jury both, and thereby produce a very biased, jingoistic opinion which seeks to appease the saffron brigade. In return, these media outlets win governmental favour and contracts.²²

4.1 Structural Capture

Indian tv channels such as Republic TV, Zee News, and Times Now are either owned or sponsored by companies that are allied to the BJP. They only propagate state narrative and are rewarded by advertising, particularly by government ad revenue. News sourcing is yet another issue: Indian newsrooms are dependent on briefings from the government or military sources, particularly during crisis. The media, thus, becomes an echo chamber, spreading information without verifying official claims. Flak against critics is quick, from sedition charges to targeted harassment.

²² Interviewee 1

Lastly, the ideological filter of nationalism and Islamophobia is used to label any criticism or opposition to state discourse as anti-national.

4.2 Nationalist Spectacle and Cinema

In India, Bollywood and mainstream media have been tactically weaponised to create a Hindutva-based nationalism. Uri, Shershaah, and The Kashmir Files promote military violence and portray Muslims and Pakistanis as a threat, reinforcing BJP's propaganda.²³

This cinematic narrative has found its way into the newsroom. Indian primetime news is based on the use of emotionalism, and staged debates to spread hyper-nationalist discourses. The role of the media in the spreading of disinformation and wartime mythmaking is particularly strong. Indian media outlets accused Pakistan of the 2025 Pahalgam attacks while Indian government refused Pakistan's offer of a neutral investigation.²⁴ In May 2025 attacks, Indian media falsely claimed that Karachi and Islamabad were annihilated, hailing Modi as a national hero.²⁵ Similar disinformation campaign was seen in 2019 following the Pulwama attack. A video shot in Iraq was presented as evidence of Balakot attacks.²⁶ Dainik Jagran, an Indian

²³ Laiba Binte Zafar, "Bollywood's Cinematic Narratives: Shaping Youth's Perspective of Pakistan and Kashmir Conflict," <https://kiir.org.pk/Research-Paper/Bollywoods-Cinematic-Narratives-Shaping-Youths-Perspective-of-Pakistan-And-Kashmir-Conflict-3754>, 2019, <https://www.kiir.org.pk/Research-Paper/bollywoods-cinematic-narratives-shaping-youths-perspective-of-pakistan-and-kashmir-conflict-3754>.

²⁴ Aamir Zulfiqar Khan, "India's Pahalgam Gamble," *The Nation*, May 16, 2025, <https://www.nation.com.pk/16-May-2025/india-s-pahalgam-gamble>.

²⁵ "Fact-Check Exposes Indian Media's Fabricated Reports on Indo-Pak Conflict," *The Business Standard*, May 10, 2025, <https://www.tbsnews.net/world/south-asia/fact-check-exposes-indian-medias-fabricated-reports-indo-pak-conflict-1138706>.

²⁶ Times Fact Check, "FAKE ALERT: Bomb Explosion Video from Iraq Shared as Pulwama Terror Attack Footage," *The Times of India* (Times Of India, February 18, 2019), <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/times-fact-check/news/fake-alert-bomb-explosion-video-from-iraq-shared-as-pulwama-terror-attack-footage/articleshow/68049905.cms>.

newspaper, claimed that 300 terrorists were killed by India in Balakot strikes. This was later refuted by global fact-checkers.²⁷

All of these dynamics show what Herman and Chomsky call a complete ideological apparatus. The truth is replaced with fear and nationalism is treated as entertainment. In the BJP controlled ecosystem, the truth does not matter, what counts is the emotional mobilisation that fuels Hindutva.

5. FALSE FLAG OPERATIONS AS TOOLS OF CONSENT MANUFACTURING

False flag operations have long been used by regimes to justify acts of aggression²⁸, and rally popular support. In Modi's India, false flag operations, along with media control, have become a key strategy in furthering the ideological goals of Hindutva.

5.1. Political Utility and Strategic Timing

The Pulwama attack 2019²⁹ and the Pahalgam attack 2025³⁰, which happened during the times of increasing domestic unrest, prove the deployment of security incidents as a political tool. In both cases, the Modi government was quick to blame Pakistan and launched a retaliation without permitting neutral investigation. Such episodes put political debate inside India on hold and refocus the national attention

²⁷ Rachel Blundy, "No, This Video Does Not Include an Admission by the Pakistani Army That 200 Militants Were Killed in Airstrikes by the Indian Air Force in Balakot," *Fact Check*, April 17, 2024, <https://factcheck.afp.com/no-video-does-not-include-admission-pakistani-army-200-militants-were-killed-airstrikes-indian-air>.

²⁸ Larry Bogslaw, "False Flags as a Method of Information Warfare - East View Press," *East View Press*, June 30, 2019, <https://www.eastviewpress.com/false-flags-information-warfare/>.

²⁹ Sher Ali Kakar, "The Pulwama Revelations Modi S Fake Narrative," *The Express Tribune* (The Express Tribune, May 2, 2023), <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2414493/the-pulwama-revelations-modis-fake-narrative>.

³⁰ Mahwish Hafeez, Edi Ted, and Khurram Abbas, "Pahalgam Incident: Another False Flag Operation?," 2025, https://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/IB_Mahwish_April_29_2025-2.pdf.

outward to Pakistan as an external danger. India's pattern of false flag operations has now become very predictable.³¹

The Pahalgam episode of 2025 occurred soon after mass protests against unemployment and inflation in India. Indian media attributed the attacks to Pakistan within a few hours and declined Pakistan's offer to carry out a neutral investigation of the attacks. India then launched airstrikes against Pakistan. The aggressive posture of Indian government was labelled as 'retaliation' and 'defence' by the *Godi* media.³²

The public discourse in India underwent a significant change post-Pahalgam. Calls for domestic accountability over government's shortcomings were silenced while Modi's image was also reconstructed to present him as a firm wartime leader. Modi continues to follow authoritarian patterns, using planned crisis as a chance to strengthen his own political power while dividing the Indian society along communal lines, ultimately legitimising Hindutva.³³

5.2. Normalising Militarism through Crisis

In addition to producing short-term rallying effect, false flag operations also create long-term ideological profits. Such crises enable the state to legitimise aggressive posturing, spend more money on the military and silence dissent under the pretext of defending the nation against the enemy. False flag operations further provide legitimacy for laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, which disproportionately targets Muslims and other dissenters who are critical of the Modi

³¹ Interviewee 1

³² Muhammad Musa, "Pulwama to Pahalgam: How India's Propaganda Strategy Is Losing Global Credibility," *Kashmir Media Service - Latest and Breaking News from Kashmir and India* (Kashmir Media Service, May 27, 2025), <https://kmsnews.org/kms/2025/05/27/pulwama-to-pahalgam-how-indias-propaganda-strategy-is-losing-global-credibility.html>.

³³ Durdana Najam, "Pahalgam Exposes India S Kashmir Contradiction," *The Express Tribune*, May 2025, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2543263/pahalgam-exposes-indias-kashmir-contradiction>.

government. Effectively, the crisis mood establishes the political environment that is required to undermine procedural democracy without eliminating its formal appearance.³⁴

5.3. Nationalist Mobilisation Against Pakistan

False flag operations amplify the perception that Hindu majority is under a constant threat by Indian Muslims who are backed by Pakistan in their aggression against Hindus. This false perception unites the Hindus against a common enemy and increases in-group cohesion. This sentimental reasoning forms the basis of mass appeal of Hindutva. False flag operations, therefore, do not only work on a military or diplomatic level, but on a psychological one as well: they identify minorities as dangerous, justify state violence, and inhibit civil inquiry by conflating criticism with treason.

6. GEOPOLITICAL AND DOMESTIC CONSEQUENCES OF HINDUTVA CONSOLIDATION

The ideological project of the RSS-BJP nexus has not only transformed the Indian political and social structure but also its role in South Asia. While false flag operations and media manipulation have created political legitimacy for Modi, they have also led to certain structural ramifications, including polarisation within Indian society, loss of institutional trust, regional destabilisation and democratic backsliding in India.

³⁴ Debashis Chakrabarti, "Modi's Post-Pahalgam War Rhetoric: Manufacturing Militarism in a Divided India – OpEd," *Eurasia Review*, May 14, 2025, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/14052025-modis-post-pahalgam-war-rhetoric-manufacturing-militarism-in-a-divided-india-oped>.

6.1. Global Image Crisis

The status of India as the largest democracy in the world has also become doubtful under Premiership of PM Modi. Freedom House,³⁵ V-Dem,³⁶ and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom have lowered India's ratings³⁷ on their democracy scale due to media suppression, discriminatory laws, and state violence. As Modi continues to engage in strategic partnerships with the West, particularly in anti-China and trade orientations, India continues to lose its normative credibility. Its soft power which was once based on an image of secularism and democratic pluralism is being compromised by international concerns about human rights violations and anti-Muslim violence.

6.2. Implications for Pakistan and Regional Stability

The ideological transformation of India under the BJP-RSS regime is bound to have spillover effects for the entire region, especially for Pakistan.

6.2.1 Diplomatic Paralysis and Strategic Mistrust

The ideological stance of the BJP-RSS government has rendered a stable diplomatic engagement between the two neighbours practically impossible. Bilateral or multilateral dialogue mechanisms have time and again failed due to India's inflammatory rhetoric that is usually accompanied by politically inspired spectacles. For Pakistan, this failure of formal diplomacy implies operating in a regional environment in which predictability is undermined and crisis management is

³⁵ Freedom House, "India: Freedom in the World 2025 Country Report | Freedom House," *Freedom House*, 2024, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-world/2025>.

³⁶ Soutik Biswas, "'Electoral Autocracy': The Downgrading of India's Democracy," *BBC News*, March 16, 2021, sec. India, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56393944>.

³⁷ Swati Gandhi, "US Religious Freedom Panel Recommends Sanctions against Indian Spy Agency," *@Bsindia* (Business Standard, March 26, 2025), https://www.business-standard.com/external-affairs-defence-security/news/uscirf-recommends-sanctions-against-india-raw-2025-125032600554_1.html.

permanently compromised. Systematic trust-building has been undone, and there is little room to employ backchannel diplomacy or institutional negotiation.

6.2.2 Escalation of Security Threats and Cross-Border Provocations

Not only has the Hindutva narrative led to an unfavourable ideological atmosphere, but it has also been converted into more kinetic and hybrid attacks against Pakistan. Under the Doval doctrine, India is supporting insurgencies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. In addition, false flag operations are carried out and then used to justify several cross-border military operations, such as Operation Sindoor. In this way, Modi regime is trying to normalise conflict below the nuclear threshold, increasing instability and undermining the principles of deterrence.

6.2.3 Regional Isolation Campaigns and Narrative Warfare

Indian has been increasing its efforts to isolate Pakistan on regional and international fronts. India's information warfare, augmented by Indian media, think tanks, and international lobbying portrays Pakistan not as a state actor with legitimate concerns, but as an existential threat. This is a misrepresentation of Pakistan and complicates its engagement on multilateral platforms. Hindutva discourse has become an ideological opponent of economic integration and confidence-building in South Asia.

6.2.4 Threat to Strategic Stability in a Nuclear Environment

The ideological transformation of India has serious repercussions for strategic stability in South Asia. The probability of miscalculation has increased manifold because of India's escalatory doctrines, aggressive military posture, and refusal to engage in dialogue under the excuse of nationalism. For Pakistan, this presents a very precarious environment where deterrence must be maintained not just against military

aggression, but also against irrational decision-making on the basis of domestic political optics in India.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has demonstrated that the emergence of the BJP-RSS nexus under Narendra Modi is not just a political change but rather an ideological one, which is aimed at the ultimate creation of a *Hindu Rashtra*. The state has used false flag operations and media manipulation to generate public consent for exclusionary nationalism. Based on these results, the following scholarly and research-based recommendations are provided.

7.1 Academic and Research Interventions

There needs to be an interdisciplinary study of ideological consolidation which is taking place under the Modi regime. This includes:

7.1.1 Critical Analysis of Hindutva as Political Thought

Political science and history curricula must address the issue of how Hindutva redefines national identity, rewrites history and weaponises communal memory to create political legitimacy.

7.1.2 Mapping the Media-Military-Political Nexus

International relations and media studies courses need to look at the role of compliant media outlets in promoting disinformation following false flag operations, the cycle of elections and military aggression, and the role of spectacle as a substitute for journalism.

7.1.3 Compilation of a Disinformation Archive

Researchers in civil society and scholars ought to create an open-access archive of media coverage and state discourse of events like Pulwama, Uri and Pahalgam. Such an archive would provide a source of primary material, using which critical studies could be carried out in the future, and which could serve as a scholarly defence against ideological oblivion.

7.2 Strategic Policy and Media Reforms in Pakistan

While research is essential, Pakistan must also respond proactively by investing in media reform and strategic communication to counter ideological propaganda across borders.

7.2.1 Media Literacy for Resilience

Pakistan should promote national media literacy programs—especially targeting youth and future leaders—that teach the mechanisms of propaganda, ideological framing, and disinformation campaigns. These programs should equip citizens to critically engage with narratives disseminated both domestically and from across the border.

8. CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the manner in which the rise of the BJP under Narendra Modi with the ideological support of the RSS has turned the Indian state into a site of deliberate ideological engineering. Media manipulation, false flag operations, and identity-based propaganda has not been incidental rather central to the long-term project of building a *Hindu Rashtra*. The analysis through the Propaganda Model and Social Identity Theory has shown how the Modi regime has been able to manufacture

consent not based on rational persuasion and democratic debate, but on fear, spectacle and manufactured crisis.

The media ecosystem in India, which is under the ideological control of the BJP-RSS complex, has been instrumental in creating a militant, emotionally charged nationalism that imposes the idea that dissent is a form of betrayal and pluralism a sign of weakness. Indian Muslims and Pakistan have been systematically built up as eternal enemies - a means to bring the Hindu majority to a siege mentality and to justify the destruction of democratic institutions.

The consequences of this ideological trajectory are not limited to India. Indian foreign policy towards Pakistan has become radically aggressive, and ideological performance rather than pragmatic statecraft has become the driving force behind it. This poses a grave concern to the stability of the region especially with the nuclear potentials of the two states. Thus, the goals of Hindutva are not limited to domestic politics. Modi aims to transform the ideological environment of South Asia by cultural hegemony and historical revisionism. Although the BJP does not lack electoral legitimacy, its rule has become electoral authoritarian, with the facade of democracy masking the growing majoritarianism. To the neighbouring states such as Pakistan, it is important to comprehend this ideological machinery not only as a political menace, but as a transnational issue that requires informed, strategic and research-informed response.

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