

Extremism as a Transnational Threat: Comparative study of White supremacy and Hindutva

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Abstract:

Extremism is the underlying cause of domestic and international terrorism. The ever-increasing threat of extremism has shaped a geo political discourse which has given rise to politics of hatred and exclusion. The latter manifests itself as hyper nationalism. The objective of the study is to compare the common denominators between the extremist ideologies of ‘White Supremacism’ (engulfing the West) and ‘Hindutva’ (infecting the South Asian region). The paper yields a comparative analysis of ideological operationalization of white racism and Hindutva fascism in the West and India respectively. The paper highlights the characteristics of white supremacy and Hindutva and discovers the common denominators between these two ideologies such as fundamentalist extremism, exclusionary politics, Islamophobia and perverted nationalism.

Key words: Extremism, Hyper nationalism, White supremacy, Hindutva

Extremism: A Phenomenon

Extremism as a concept is used to describe religious, social or political belief systems that exist outside of (mainstream) belief systems which are broadly accepted in society. Extremism rejects the existing institutional framework of governance, socio-economic structure and means that involves political participation. It attempts to craft incipient narratives and ideologies to engender structural changes in all the facets of life – economic, religious, social and political – by challenging and actively opposing the legitimacy

and legality of existing systems. Therefore, extremists seek to impose their values, beliefs and ideology through coercion or indoctrination, while preaching intolerance towards other belief systems and perspectives.

According to the Counter Extremism Strategy of the UK, “*Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to fundamental values including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and respect and tolerance for different faiths and beliefs*”.¹ Extremists seek to impose their values, beliefs and ideology through coercion or indoctrination, while preaching intolerance towards other belief systems and perspectives.

Modern day extremists not only leave a trail of blood, but also a list of creative ways to kill: Agro-terrorism, aircraft hijacking, bio-terrorism, car bombing, hostage taking, insurgency, kidnapping, letter bombing, Illegal nuclear proliferation, piracy, propaganda of the deed, redemption movements, school shootings and suicide bombing are only a few. The goals of these extremist groups are absolute, and they show no room for tolerance or negotiations. Violent extremists have many concocted views that they use to justify violence and hateful attacks, such as extremists of white supremacy believing that inferior race members should be killed; environmental extremists believe that it is necessary to damage property and even harm people to protect the environment; religious extremists believe that violent attacks are necessary to protect their beliefs and anarchist extremists believe that society does not require any government or legislation; thus, violence is needed to create such a society.

¹ Counter Extremism Strategy, London: Counter-Extremism Directorate, October 2015. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf

An increasing threat of extremism shaped the global political discourse, giving rise to extreme right-wing politics of hatred and hyper-nationalism. Contemporary Western and South Asian countries have also experienced a marked upturn in extremism and heightened terrorist activities, resulting in the highest annual number of fatalities. Due to which, states face multiple and pressing concerns, ranging from fanaticism, fundamentalism and religious intolerance to ethno-political violence and exclusionary politics creating an unstable environment regionally and internationally.

Extremism as a Transnational Threat – An Overview of 21st Century

The fallout of extremism has constituted a transitional character igniting a global security crisis threatening the sovereignty and territorial integrity of an existing nation-state system. It has challenged the legitimacy of political regimes and the security of citizens. The tectonic geo-political shifts are moving towards a new normal, rapidly shifting environment with an interconnected, globalized world that has unfolded far-reaching threatening dividends. No country is now immune to the contagiousness of extremism, which has struck fear across the globe.

The wars of the 21st century would be fought against the spread of extremism, which have been gradually capturing the minds and administering territories. The intensification in globalization has already hastened the process.² The like-minded groups or Lone-actors all over the world are recruited with no hinges, as the information technology is successfully used for dissemination of extreme ideological manifestations.³

² Shaukat Aziz, "The Geopolitical New Normal." *Horizons: Journal of International Relations and Sustainable Development*, no. 8 (2016): 42-55, DOI:10.2307/48573686.

³ Ibid.

Extremism has globally constituted dire threats to national security of countries and human existence overall. According to some experts, the World Trade Centre attack on September 11, 2001 was a triggering point. Within the same period of time and following years witnessed spike in the terrorism and extremism. However, the notion of extremism is as old, but with transformational orders, its characteristics evolved into a transnational one. The repercussions since the twentieth century until now are immense – lives lost, cities devastated, empires crumbled and nation-states were outrightly devastated. This also had an adverse and long-lasting impact on national economies, national security and stability.

According to the U.S Central Intelligence Agency forecast in a report on Global Trends identified categorically that the second epoch of Globalization will unbridle more complexities than the previous one.⁴ As the evolution of the contemporary era will be marked by financial instability and increasing socio-economic divide, consequently, regional countries will bear the brunt of economic stagnation, religious and cultural alienations. Amidst such evolution political, ethnic, ideological, nationalist and religious extremism will witness a remarkable spike.

To the West, terrorism and terrorist acts are widely affiliated and tagged with Islamist militant organisations such as al-Qaeda and the Islamic State (IS). However, according to The Soufan Centre, the threat emanating from white supremacist terrorist have surpassed them and is now becoming an uphill task to defeat in long term. Centre also points out that 73% of deadly

⁴ Richard Sandbrook and David Romano, Globalization, extremism and violence in poor countries, *Third World Quarterly* 25, no.6 (2004):1007-1030, DOI: [10.1080/0143659042000256869](https://doi.org/10.1080/0143659042000256869)

violent extremist incidents in the United States between 2001 and 2016 were perpetrated by white supremacist extremists, whereas, radical Islamists were responsible for only 23%.⁵ It is pertinent to mention here that the significant portion of these terrorism related concerns are mainly backed by right-wing extremist, where the lone actors or lone-wolf poses threat.⁶

The development in 20th and 21st century right wing extremism has strong connection with emergence and launching of these lone-actors.⁷ If we trace the recent trends of terrorism, far-right terrorism in Europe is mainly decentralized having extremists with international connections. These extremist individuals operate in such political ecosystems which have more acceptances towards extremism. The terrorist acts today are carried out by individual actors rather than groups. The individuals like Eric Rudolph, David Copeland and Anders Breivik, Brenton Tarrant have similar backgrounds with right-wing extremism.⁸

The inexorably upward trends in the South Asian region towards violence and extremism is because of the regional and extra regional states' growing interest in the region have a deep impact on the geopolitics of the region. As a result, highly charged environment has drawn religious, ethnic and

⁵ White Supremacy Extremism: *The Transnational Rise of the Violent White Supremacist Movement*, The Soufan Center, September 2019.

<https://thesoufancenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Report-by-The-Soufan-Center-White-Supremacy-Extremism-The-Transnational-Rise-of-The-Violent-White-Supremacist-Movement.pdf>

⁶ Mark S. Hamm and Ramon Spaaij, *The Age of Lone Wolf Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017)

⁷ Daniel Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century: the 'National Socialist Underground' and the History of Terror from the Far right in Germany* (London New York: Routledge, 2017)

⁸ Cato Hemmingby and Tore Bjørge, "Terrorist Target Selection: The Case of Anders Behring Breivik." *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, No. 6, (2018)

nationalistic lines giving rise to extremism.⁹ India being one of the strongest democracies is the breeding ground and venue for extremism having catastrophic reverberation in the whole region.

White Supremacy: Dark Side of Enlightenment

Historically, white supremacy is perpetuated institutionally by a system of exploitation and oppression of people of colour by none other than white people and European nations, in order to maintain and defend their system of power, wealth and privilege.¹⁰ They hold ideas and beliefs about the superiority of the “white” human races over other groups. In the present times, white supremacy is to describe such groups which advocate ultra-nationalism, racism and hold fascist doctrines. The utter reliance of such groups is violence in order to achieve their goals.

Professor Frances Lee Ansley is of the opinion, “*A political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources and in which white dominance and non-white subordination exists across a broad array of institutions and social settings*”.¹¹ In the United States, Legal apartheid during the Jim Crow era, white supremacism had political support and acceptance, which is happening precisely in today's Europe. White supremacy witnessed a revival in the United States in the late 1950's and 1960's, where it gradually manifested itself into a

⁹ Ion Marin, “The Geopolitics of Religion and Ethnicity,” *Geopolitics, History and International Relations 1*,” No.2, (2009): 134-138
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/e26803990>

¹⁰ “What is White Supremacy?” Elizabeth Betita Martinez, http://www.pym.org/annual-sessions/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2017/06/What_Is_White_Supremacy_Martinez.pdf

¹¹ Frances Lee Ansley, “Stirring the Ashes: Race, Class and the Future of Civil Rights,” *Scholarship*, 74 CORNELL L., 1024 n. 129 (1989)
<https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3431&context=clr>

white movement. The ideas of white supremacist were expressed mainly in programs like anti-immigrant policies such as the National Front (France), The Republicans (*Die Republikaner*, Germany), Freedom Party (*Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*, Austria), lately the then President Donald J. Trump echoed the same white supremacist agenda which disavowed racism and outrightly supported the white identity. This also make a strong case for *Herrenvolk democracy* of Frederickson, “*Herrenvolk democratic society is a society that pushes the principle of differentiation by race to its logical outcome and people of colour, however numerous or acculturated they may be, are treated as permanent aliens or outsiders*”.¹²

Elements of the Alt-Right movement can be viewed in the United States as an American version of ethno-nationalism. However, many Alt-Right activists are widely associated with the culture of white supremacy. They identify themselves as “white nationalists”. Alt-Right and the Identitarian movements fall under ethno-nationalism, the European Identitarians tend to be drawn towards cultural nationalism, whereas the American Alt-Right/white nationalists towards the racial nationalism.

White Supremacy is perceived as an overtly transnational threat in the 21st century. The dangerous propagation of their beliefs that white people are racially superiors, and should always remain ascendant is alarming for the rest of the world. This is demonstrated by slogans such as, the so-called Fourteen Words: “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.”¹³ The white supremacist threat is growing

¹² George M. Frederickson, *White supremacy: A comparative study in American and South African history* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1981) doi:10.1086/ahr/86.5.1139-a

¹³ Adam Serwer, “White Nationalism’s Deep American Roots,” *The Atlantic*, April 2019,

extraordinarily due to which the West is itself acknowledging this extremist phenomenon having a transnational character. The extremist tendencies become vile when members of white supremacists claim that a ‘racially sovereign nation’ should be established which is only governed by whites, in which self-determination is exercised and is free of other minorities which they term as “mud races”. Moreover, they claim that the white race is the only pure and master race of the earth. Steadily, the noticeable influence in policy making related to issues like poverty, crime, civil rights and immigration is growing throughout the West.

Hindutva: An Extremist Ideology

Initially, Hindutva appeared in the mid-1880s in an Indian fiction novel. However, the term ‘Hindutva’ was espoused by V.D.Savarkar in an essay he wrote in 1923 titled ‘Hindutva: Who is a Hindu?’.¹⁴ Hindutva is often synonymously confused with Hinduism although it is not identical in its nuances and connotations. It promotes the concept of “India for Hindus only” and is adopted by ultra nationalist Hindu organisations like Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Hindu Sena and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP).¹⁵ As the ideology of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Hindutva is also reflected from the electoral manifesto of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Moreover, its national identity is based on Hindu religion whereas it excludes monotheistic religions like Islam and Christianity.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/04/adam-serwer-madison-grant-white-nationalism/583258/>

¹⁴ A.G. Noorani, “What is Hindutva?”, *Dawn*, December 10, 2016,

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1301496>

¹⁵ Inam Ul Haque, “Where would Hindutva steer 21st century India?,” *The Express Tribune*, August 27, 2019, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2042782/hindutva-steer-21st-century-india>

It is quite ironic that in the 21st century, today's so-called secular India has degenerated to such a narrow exclusivity that the political discourse is thriving by fermenting ultra nationalist and religious based xenophobia. Hindu supremacism plays a central role in Modi's political ideology and is also portrayed as the 'unfinished business of partition'.¹⁶ The political landscape of India has become treacherous where communities find themselves engulfed in "us versus them" dilemma. Modi and his administration is acting antithetical to democratic and secular principles enshrined in the Constitution of India. Revocation of Article 370 and 35(A) through unconstitutional means also highlights BJP's aggressive posture which is neither secular nor democratic in its outlook.

Moreover, the South Asian region has witnessed an upsurge in violence and extremism during the last two decades. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) coming into power has unleashed a series of unfortunate events in the form of growing militancy, religious extremism, terrorism and violence against the country's religious minorities i.e., Muslims. The practical manifestation of BJP's policies is evident from instances like carrying out attacks on the places of worship, delegitimization of interfaith marriages, privileging of Hindu symbolism, equating of Hindu identity as national identity and conversion of Muslim and Christian families back to Hinduism. The imposition of Hindu culture on religious minorities and the enactment of legislation against Muslims in the form of Citizenship Amendment Act 2019 and National Register of Citizens (NRC) also sheds light on India's exclusionary politics.

¹⁶ Talat Shabbir, "Modi's Hindu Supremacism," *The Express Tribune*, September 2, 2020, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2262166/modis-hindu-supremacism>

The reluctant and ignorant attitude of BJP is reflected by the fact that the government does not condemn such violent incidents. The demonstrators of Hindutva roam free without facing any serious charges. To quote a few violent incidents, Malegaon blasts of 2006 and 2008, the Mecca Masjid bombing of 2007, bomb attacks in Maharashtra in 2008 and Goa in 2009, and the killing of rationalist leaders in the past few years have intensified BJP's reluctance to rein in the Hindu extremists. Thus, inaction of the government encourages and boosts extremists to act with impunity.

Hence, India is further pushing its Hindutva agenda in Indian Occupied Kashmir by taking advantage of COVID-19 and diverting the attention of global community from Indian instigated state terrorism and human rights violations.¹⁷ Thus, India needs to be cautious of its status as a sick man of South Asia¹⁸ and realize that divisive rhetoric will have far reaching consequences not only for India's international repute but also for the regional security.

Ideological Operationalization of White Supremacy and Hindutva

The origins of Christian fundamentalism lay inside the North American society which bore the burden of exterminating the Native American and enslaving the Negro. In this milieu, the teachings of Christ which were meant for all races and colours were narrowly understood by those Europeans who settled in America. Hence, their fundamentalism became mixed with racism, the biggest proof of which is the prevalence of black churches throughout the plantations.

¹⁷ Naveed Siddiqui, "India taking advantage of Covid-19 crisis to push 'Hindutva' agenda in occupied Kashmir: FO," *Dawn*, July 17, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1552954>

¹⁸ Sanjay Kumar, "India has now become the sick man of South Asia," *Dawn*, October 26, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1587096>

In India on the other hand, the Hindu fundamentalism rooted in the RSS ideology was the work of mischief by the British colonizers who reformed traditional Hinduism according to their own ideas, so that they can offer greater resistance against Islam which came to be perceived as the common enemy of both the British colonizers and the Hindu community. In India, the Muslim went from being rulers to being ruled whereas for Hindus was change of rule from Muslim to British. While Muslims accepted the Hindu tradition for the sake of Hindus, the modernism struck British were hell-bent on reforming Hinduism and Savarkar who was an atheist was commissioned to do this job.

In North America, evangelism led to the exponential growth of Christian fundamentalism as an ideological bulwark against the atheist Soviet Union, but in India RSS mentality had to wait for 60 more years to precipitate into the Hindutva demand. But it is interesting to know that even during early secular pre partition years, RSS continued to grow but made steady gains of radicalizing the Hindu society using the Pakistan as a bogeyman.

Common Denominators – Unifying White Supremacy and Hindutva

The two extremist ideologies i.e. Hindutva engulfing the South Asian region and White Supremacy in the West are closely linked in its ideological operationalization. The philosophical foundation of Hindutva is similar as Italy's Fascist Party (IFP) and Germany's Nazi Party of instituting ultra-nationalism. An ideological likeness could be traced to Adolf Hitler's vision regarding the nexus between the state and race.¹⁹ Both Hindutva and White

¹⁹ Aparna Priyadarshi, "Bigotry unifies Hindutva and white supremacy," *Asia Times*, December 20, 2019, <https://asiatimes.com/2019/12/bigotry-unifies-hindutva-and-white-supremacy/>

Supremacy are unified by the belief secularism and cross-border migration disrupts the dominant and 'pure' groups in society. This is associated with the "The Great Replacement Theory", put forward by Renaud Camus is an ethno-nationalistic theory focusing on the replacement of an indigenous European i.e., white population with non-European immigrants.²⁰

The renowned Hindu nationalist groups like Hindu Sena and Republican Hindu Coalition endorsed Donald Trump when he talked about imposing a Muslim ban and waging fight against radical Islamic terrorism.²¹ Hindu Sena, also known as Army of Hindus has been linked with series of inter-communal incidents in India has been found throwing parties to mark Trump's birthday.²² Modi and Trump both advocate exclusivism. Hindutva believes in the creation of Akhand Bharat that aims at the colonization of its South Asian neighbouring states and conversion of these states to Hinduism.²³ Similarly, Trump has time and again reiterated to 'Make America Great Again'. The hard-line policies regarding minorities, migrants and Muslims exhibit how Modi and Trump have remained on the same page. The protests and aggravations of Hindu nationalists and the Western far right are also similar. Therefore, these similar underlying displacement fears are reverberated in both ideologies.

The common denominators between the far-right groups in the West and Hindu nationalists are discussed below.

²⁰ The Great Replacement Theory, Counter Extremism Project, <https://www.counterextremism.com/content/great-replacement-theory>

²¹ Priyadarshi, "Bigotry unifies Hindutva."

²² Aadita Chaudhary, "Why white supremacists and Hindu nationalists are so alike," *Al Jazeera*, December 13, 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2018/12/13/why-white-supremacists-and-hindu-nationalists-are-so-alike/>

²³ Farrukh Khan Pitafi, "Modi unleashed," *The Express Tribune*, August 7, 2020, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2258469/modi-unleashed>

A. Religious Fundamentalism

Religious Fundamentalism; evolved from the Evangelical Christians' attempt to address theological concerns regarding Protestants in a series of pamphlets titled "The Fundamentals" during 1910-1915 has been morphed into a unique form in the modern world.²⁴ Beyond its generally notorious image of barbarians and terrorists ready to attack anyone refuting their beliefs is a group of people that believe in advocacy of strict conformity to sacred text/religious teachings. Moreover, they are also known to believe in superiority of their own religious scriptures and propose a crude division between righteous individuals and evildoers. Furthermore, the transnational nature of religion facilitates in universalizing individual grievances as part of the global struggle.

The occidental spread and origin of fundamentalism has a deep-rooted prejudice when it comes to its modern interpretation, unknown to many, religious fundamentalism exists and flourishes in the West as much as it does so in the Orient. Christian fundamentalism considered to be the strongest predictor of hostility against Muslims and Jews and re-emerged with new zeal and zest in the 1970s under political patronage from the Republican Party in the United States.²⁵ Along with this, the existence of fundamentalist religious cults like the Westboro Baptist Church, widely known for its message of vengeance and for engaging in pickets with

²⁴ Alex Fry, "Religious Fundamentalism: The Origin of a Dubious Category," *LSE*, July 6, 2020, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/religionglobalsociety/2020/07/religious-fundamentalism-the-origins-of-a-dubious-category/>

²⁵ Zahid Shahab Ahmed and Galib Bashirov, "Religious Fundamentalism and Violent Extremism," *The Difficult Task of Peace*, (2020), pp.245-260, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/335663357_Religious_Fundamentalism_and_Violent_Extremism

inflammatory anti-American, anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic, anti-Mormon and Islamophobic hate speech is proof enough of the entrenchment of religious fundamentalism in the West.²⁶ The recent wide spread Islamophobia and political actions like ban on Muslim immigration at the governmental level by so called liberal states of the West also reveal a dangerous pattern in the spread of religious fundamentalism in the occident.

Hindu fundamentalism or Hindutva (Hindu-ness) can be described as a mix of majoritarian and ultra-nationalist attitude propagated by a chauvinistic urge to enforce it. This image of ultra-nationalism primarily focuses to threaten and challenge a minority that is usually a Muslim with key consideration to the historical and demographic contiguity of Hindustan. Incidences like the Gujrat riots where 254 Hindus & 790 Muslims were killed and the almost daily cases of mob lynching, forced conversions, communal violence based upon issues like cow protection have revealed a dangerous scheme of how Hindutva has antagonized the Hindu youth against the Muslims and other minorities. The rise of cow vigilantism and Brahmin initiated violence against lower caste individuals has also led to societal disruption as well as the killing of Muslims and Dalits.²⁷ The most recent implementation of NRC to ethnically cleanse the land off Muslims is yet another practical manifestation of how BJP a political face of Hindutva spearheaded by organizations like the “Shiv Saina” is employing its exclusionary tactics. Due to the failure of not providing evidence of their

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Aparna Priyadarshi, Hindutva’s stark parallels with White Supremacy,” *Asia Times*, December 21, 2019, <https://asiatimes.com/2019/12/hindutvas-stark-parallels-with-white-supremacy/>

citizenship, the Indian government has established detention centres to settle the stateless persons until they provide evidence.

Moreover, the inauguration of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya at the very spot of Babri Mosque after its demolition in Uttar Pradesh on August 5, 2020 depicts Modi's political ownership and symbolism in a way that marks one year since the revocation of semi-autonomous status of occupied Jammu Kashmir.²⁸ Also, Amit Shah, Indian Minister of Home Affairs, has called Muslims termites who are eating away India and in Uttar Pradesh, removal of symbols associated with Muslims have also been carried out by Yogi Adityanath, the current Chief Minister of UP.²⁹

B. Exclusionary Politics

The "Us versus them" approach divides communities along the communal lines through the enforcement of violence. Exclusion of minorities from public life by discrimination, fomenting hatred or through violent acts has become a recurrent phenomenon reflected in Hindutva as well as White Supremacy. Exclusionary politics of Trump is visible by instances like Trump's anti Mexican rhetoric, his growing populism, unleashing of xenophobia (tirade against Ilhan Omar), travel restrictions specifically exclusionary immigration policies of Trump and views about refugees. Trump's assault on refugees has been multidimensional as he has issued an executive order to veto the resettlement of refugees.³⁰ Furthermore, Trump's

²⁸ "Modi to lay foundation of Ayodhya temple on Aug 5," *Dawn*, July 27, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1571379>

²⁹ Shahid Javed Burki, "How an aggressively Hindu India poses a problem for Islamabad," *The Express Tribune*, May 11, 2020, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2218509/aggressively-hindu-india-poses-problem-islamabad>

³⁰ Zolan Kanno Youngs and Michael D. Shear, "Trump Virtually Cuts Off Refugees as He Unleashes a Tirade on Immigrants," *The New York Times*, October 1, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/01/us/politics/trump-refugees.html>

anti-Asian remarks about COVID-19, calling it a “Chinese virus” have seen a surge in Anti-Asian hate incidents. The outbreak of coronavirus has sparked the rising tide of xenophobia globally.³¹ Moreover, from Western perspective, Hungarian Prime Minister and Austrian chancellor have imposed strict immigration policies to shut down the Balkan route used by migrants and refugees to gain access to Central and Western European countries.³²

As an ultra-extremist ideology, Hindutva aims to wipe out the Muslims and non-Hindus of India. The exclusionary tactics of Hindutva are indicated by instances such as stripping of Indian citizenship from Muslims, mob lynching, rapes, mass murders and genocide of Kashmiris.³³ RSS being BJP’s ideological patent, does not view Muslims as true Indians. Muslims have been pushed to the borderline of society as Nehruvian/Gandhian secularism has been scrapped in favor of a muscular and toxic Hindutva narrative.³⁴ The boycott of Muslim traders and denied access of Muslims to hospitals depicts how Indians are disenfranchised by a violent majoritarian narrative.³⁵ The non-Indian Muslims who amplify their voice are often silenced by the Hindutva establishment. Moreover, from a legal perspective, exclusionary legislation is aimed at disenfranchising Muslims. The labelling of Hindus as ‘insiders’ and other religious groups as ‘outsiders’ sheds light

³¹ Angela Giuffrida and Kim Willsher, “Outbreaks of xenophobia in west as coronavirus spreads,” *The Guardian*, January 31, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/31/spate-of-anti-chinese-incidents-in-italy-amid-coronavirus-panic>

³² Aparna Priyadarshi, Hindutva’s stark parallels with White Supremacy,” *Asia Times*, December 21, 2019, <https://asiatimes.com/2019/12/hindutvas-stark-parallels-with-white-supremacy/>

³³ “Barbaric Hindutva,” *Dawn*, August 17, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1499980>

³⁴ India’s Muslims, *Dawn*, April 27, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1552548>

³⁵ Ibid

on the exclusivist trends prevalent in Modi's India. The Ghar wapsi (return to your home) campaign of Hindutva, is the deceptive euphemism used in secular India to convert Indian Muslims and Christians to Hinduism. The conversion from one religion to another religion and becoming idol worshipers signifies 'welcoming them home'. Also, a book titled as "The RSS: A View to the Inside" by Walter K. Andersen and Shridhar D. Damle reveals that Christians are not the problem but Muslims are.³⁶ Hence, Modi-Trumpian "us versus them" approach has affected marginalized communities severely giving birth to religious animosity and intolerance worldwide.

C. Islamophobia

The definitions of Islamophobia tend to contribute to fear or hatred of Muslims to their politics or culture, and to Islam and the religiosity of Muslims.³⁷ As per the definition of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness".³⁸ The term Islamophobia was popularized during the 1990s, referring neither to labour nor to capital but a global arena without a politics of its own.³⁹

³⁶ Muhammad Ali Siddiqi, Non-Fiction: The Evolution of Hindutva," *Dawn*, November 18, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1446323>

³⁷ "Islamophobia: Understanding Anti-Muslim Sentiment in the West," *GALLUP*, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>

³⁸ Amina Easat-Daas, "Islamophobia is on the rise. This is how we can tackle it," *World Economic Forum*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/02/how-to-tackle-islamophobia-the-best-strategies-from-around-europe/>

³⁹ Faisal Devji, "From Xinjiang to Germany: how did Islamophobia become a global phenomenon," *The Guardian*, March 27, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/mar/27/xinjiang-germany-islamophobia-global-phenomenon>

The frequency of Islamophobic incidents and anti-Muslim bigotry has intensified during the past decade. From the street to the state, Islamophobic elements are deeply baked into European political setup. Muslims are treated as legitimate objects of suspicion. According to the European Islamophobia Report 2018, in 2018, France witnessed an increase of 52% in Islamophobic incidents. In Austria 74% increase was observed with 540 reported cases whereas 62% in Finland, 53% in Italy and 44% in Germany.⁴⁰ Islamophobic street movements and political parties have gained prominence in Europe. European nations have also wrestled with the issue of Muslim veil and have generated multidimensional debate in terms of religious freedom, gender equality, multiculturalism, secular traditions and fears of terrorism.⁴¹ Recently, French President, Emmanuel Macron described Islam as a religion “in crisis” which has accelerated tensions between France and Muslim majority nations.⁴² The fallout got further deepened when Macron defended the publication of caricatures depicting the Prophet on free speech grounds.⁴³ Thus, protests are being carried out globally by condemning Macron’s defense of the caricatures, chanting anti-France slogans and banning of French products. Moreover, the Christchurch mosque attack of 2019 carried out by Brenton Tarrant also depicts how Muslims are being dehumanized globally.

⁴⁰ Narzanin Massoumi, “Why is Europe so Islamophobic,” *The New York Times*, March 6, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/06/opinion/europe-islamophobia-attacks.html>

⁴¹ “The Islamic veil across Europe,” *BBC News*, May 31, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-13038095>

⁴² “Tens of thousands of Muslims protest France’s Islamophobia,” *Al Jazeera*, October 30, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/30/as-anger-rises-thousands-of-muslims-protest-french-cartoons>

⁴³ “UN official expresses ‘deep concern’ over Prophet cartoon row,” *Al Jazeera*, October 29, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/29/un-official-expresses-deep-concern-over-prophet-cartoon-row>

Analysing the narrative of Islamophobia in Hindu nationalism, it is evident from Narendra Modi's political discourse. Islamophobia and BJP's Hindutva steered ideology are considered as the two sides of the same coin. It is used as a strategic weapon by BJP to push its ultra-nationalist policies and legitimize its struggle for Kashmir by associating it with 'Islamic terrorism'. Moreover, Hindu nationalist groups have time and again labelled Muslim migrants as 'infiltrators' that threaten the peace of the Hindu community. Likewise, Trump has reiterated the word 'invaders' for migrants and asylum seekers present at the US Southern border.⁴⁴ In Hindutva's context, the revocation of Article 370 of Indian constitution is also regarded as a long-cherished Hindu nationalist dream. A report released by Human Rights Watch indicates how human rights violations have been observed in Jammu and Kashmir that includes restrictions on freedom of movement, ban on public gatherings, shut down of internet and other network facilities, closure of educational institutions, detainment of political leaders and deployment of large numbers of troops.⁴⁵

D. Radical Nationalism

Radical Nationalism emerged after WW1 when Fascism and Nazism gained prominence. It aims at altering the regional and international order in your country's favour.⁴⁶ Being an exclusionary form of nationalism, it opposes the interference of the international community and does not tolerate minorities i.e., it does not view them as part of the nation. Radical

⁴⁴ Priyadarshi, "Bigotry unifies Hindutva."

⁴⁵ India: Basic Freedoms at Risk in Kashmir, *Human Rights Watch*, August 6, 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/06/india-basic-freedoms-risk-kashmir>

⁴⁶ Farid Zulfugarli, "Nationalism: Its Conservative, Liberal and Radical Conceptions," *Baku Research Institute*, <https://bakuresearchinstitute.org/nationalism-its-conservative-liberal-and-radical-conceptions/>

nationalism has also become one of dominant features of US politics as well as Indian Hindutva. The characterization of radical nationalism is based on racial and ethnic grounds as discussed below.

I. Ethnic Nationalism

Since the French Revolution, nationalism has constituted the core source of political legitimacy globally. In the nineteenth century, nationalism became increasingly ethnic in nature. It led to the disruption of political borders as seen in the case of Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian empires.⁴⁷ Ethnic nationalism, today, is identitarian in nature that helps in shaping ideas and influences public discourse. In the West, Trump has ignited the flames of ethnic nationalism along with deteriorating the norms and institutions aimed at saving humanity from such forces. Such a phenomenon has targeted migrants and other foreigners who have had violent consequences i.e., paving the way for civil war or interstate war. In Spain, the rise of the new right-wing populist party i.e., Vox has pressurized the two centre right parties, orchestrating the chances for an enduring standoff. However, in Eastern Europe, so-called frozen conflicts have been reawakened due to the return of ethnic nationalism.⁴⁸ Ethnic nationalism is prevalent at domestic level in the United States. For example, the US military is considered one of the most ethnically diverse institutions that have promoted racial equality. In 2012, Wade Michael Page, an army personnel opened fire at a Sikh

⁴⁷ Lars-Erik Cederman, "The Fatal Temptations of Ethnic Politics," *Foreign Affairs*, March 2019, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2019-02-12/blood-soil>

⁴⁸ Ibid

temple located in Wisconsin which reflects how white supremacism exists in the ranks.⁴⁹

Analysing the ideological beliefs of VD Savarkar, often called as the father of Hindutva, was clearly influenced by European ethno nationalism which he also incorporated in Hindutva's policy towards India's Muslim residents. Furthermore, the senior leadership of RSS like MS Golwalkar was also influenced by Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler.⁵⁰ Therefore in the present scenario, BJP has been successfully implementing changes in citizenship laws that are identical to Nuremberg Laws. Inspired by the US immigration policy, laws such as India's new Citizenship Amendment Act is designed to favour Hindus in the citizenship laws. Hence, ethnic nationalism exerts more influence today than it has ever before since WW2 and is deeply rooted in extremist ideologies of White Supremacy and Hindutva.

II. Racial Nationalism

Racially motivated nationalism is dominant in Trump and Modi led politics. According to a report issued by the Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC), in Trump's era, white nationalist hate groups have increased by 55%.⁵¹ Some of the famous racial networks are Nordic Resistance Movement of Sweden and Ku Klux Klan (KKK). KKK is known for its long history of

⁴⁹ Dave Philipps, "White Supremacism in the U.S. Military, Explained," *The New York Times*, February 27, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/27/us/military-white-nationalists-extremists.html>

⁵⁰ Jason Stanley, "For Trump and Modi, ethnic purity is the purpose of power," *The Guardian*, February 24, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/feb/24/trump-modi-citizenship-politics-fascism>

⁵¹ Jason Wilson, "White nationalist hate groups have grown 55% in Trump era, report finds," *The Guardian*, March 18, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/18/white-nationalist-hate-groups-southern-poverty-law-center>

violence and employing terror to achieve its white supremacist agenda. The recent 'Black Lives Matter' campaign also depicts rising racial nationalism in the West and at the same time it has raised awareness regarding racism faced by African Americans. Similarly, Modi has trampled the founding of India evident by his racist manifesto. Golwalkar, the second leader of RSS has promoted race as being fundamental to the Hindu nation due to his inspiration by Hitler's actions in Austria.⁵² Moreover, he emphasized on 'race pride at its highest' and stressed that it was a good lesson for use in India.⁵³

Conclusion

This paper has defined extremism as a pervasive but worrying phenomenon around the world. It gave an overview of the 21st Century extremist threats and focused on a comparison between extremism in the West and the East. In the quest, white supremacy was analysed in cohorts with Christian fundamentalism and in the East the focus was on the fascist politics of Hindutva and how the ideological extremism of both East and the West are operationalized in their respective domains. Some of the common denominators between white supremacist and Hindutva were religious fundamentalism, exclusionary politics, a common assault on Islam and Islamic identities and finally perverted nationalism of two types, racial and ethnic. In both cases, it was found that extremism of the mind incubated for nearly a century in order to manifest itself within the framework of democratic politics. The oldest and the largest democracies around the

⁵² Golwalkar, *We or Our Nationhood Defined*, quoted in Goodrick-Clarke, *Hitler's Priestess*, 60.

⁵³ Mehdi Hasan, "How the White Nationalists who love Trump found inspiration in the group that gave us Narendra Modi," *The Intercept*, September 21, 2019, <https://theintercept.com/2019/09/21/howdy-modi-trump-anders-brevik/>

world have succumbed to extremist thinking which is now visible despite a thin veneer of democratism.

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