GEOSTRATEGIC SHIFT IN SOUTH ASIA: THE RISE OF POPULIST INDIA AS A REGIONAL POWER AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR PAKISTAN AND THE REGION

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ABSTRACT

The intricate interplay among Akhand Bharat, the Hindutva ideology, and the surge of populism and fascism in India engenders a multifaceted and dynamic political milieu in the South Asian region. Hindutva accentuates India's cultural and religious identity, while Akhand Bharat envisions India as a cohesive geographical and historical entity. The ascent of populist fascism is propelled by robust leadership and the enactment of exclusionary legislation. This phenomenon raises apprehensions regarding communal tensions, erosion of democratic ideals, and strained international relations as India ascends under leaders espousing these ideologies. The pricking idea is about the future of South Asian politics which is getting even more complex after the rise of populism in an emerging regional economic power i.e. India. Utilizing qualitative data analysis, this paper attempts to explore the enduring ramifications of India's ascent under populist leadership and delving into its potential impact on the political stability of the South Asian region. The paper analyses the issue in the paradigm of Power Transition Theory and suggests that the rise of populism in India will potentially lead to more instability in the already complex region of South Asia.

Keywords: South Asia, Hindu Nationalism, Hindutva Ideology, Akhand Baharat, BJP, RSS

Introduction

The geopolitical landscape of South Asia exhibits a notable degree of volatility, coupled with an economic status that lags behind on the global

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scale. Geographically comparable to Europe, South Asia surpasses it in population size, thus rendering it a region of considerable demographic magnitude. Its strategic significance is underscored by the advantageous positioning afforded by its coastline and maritime connections with central Asia, the Middle East, and East Asia. South Asia wields substantial influence in both international political arenas and the global economy.This region is characterized by a rich tapestry of diverse cultures and linguistic communities among its constituent states. However, the inherent disparities pose a challenge to regional stability, fostering religious tensions and precipitating multifaceted issues. Attaining social equilibrium and fostering advancements in economic endeavours within South Asia are imperative, as they are pivotal to instigating stability and progress throughout the region (Sajjad et al, 2022).

Following the partition in 1947, India found itself in close geographical proximity to its counterpart, Pakistan, emerging as a prodigal twin. Consequently, India has grappled with persistently troubled and intricate political relations with this longstanding adversary. The trajectory of India's ascension as a prominent global power or assuming a major role on the international stage holds particular significance in mitigating the precarious stalemate between these neighbouring nations.The intricate dynamics of India-Pakistan relations are compounded by security concerns, notably for Pakistan. Historically, Pakistan played a pivotal role as a supporter of the Taliban in Afghanistan. However, the passage of time has witnessed a shift, with the Pakistani military currently engaged in a de facto civil conflict against these radical elements (Satish, 2016). Since the inauguration of Narendra Modi as the 14th Prime Minister of India, discernible shifts have become apparent in India's external conduct. Prime Minister Modi is spearheading a novel policy approach and has emerged as a significant player in the realm of global politics (Sajjad et al, 2022).

In the realm of politics, economics, and military prowess, India stands as the preeminent force in South Asia. Its neighbouring nations, including Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Pakistan, are

comparatively smaller and wield lesser power. Consequently, India harbours a desire to assert control, oversight, and leadership over these regional countries, as noted by Ahmed (2023). The nation teeters on the brink of attaining the status of a great power and assumes the role of a pivotal country in the international system. As economically robust and non-Western democracy, India is poised to play a central role in the significant global challenges that lie ahead. Recognizing the potential of a U.S.-Indian alliance, Washington aims to cultivate this partnership, understanding that realizing this potential necessitates engaging with India on its own terms. New Delhi in turn has undertaken deliberate initiatives to restructure its instant geopolitical surroundings, establish a modus vivendi with its regional rivals, China and Pakistan and reassert its influence in its "near abroad," encompassing parts of Africa, the Persian Gulf, Central and Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean region. Concurrently India has broadened its diplomatic ties with existing big powers, particularly with the United States (Mohan, 2006).

India's overarching strategic vision delineates the global landscape into three concentric circles. In the innermost circle, encapsulating the abrupt neighbourhood, India pursues a policy of primacy, seeking to create a veto over the actions of external powers. In the second circle, encompassing the extended neighbourhood spanning across Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral, India endeavours to balance the influence of other powers, aiming to safeguard its interests from potential undermining by external actors. The third circle, covering the entirety of the global stage, sees India aspiring to suppose its location as one of the large powers, actively contributing as a key player in matters of international peace and security(Mohan, 2006).

Nevertheless, the inherent apprehensions and distrust persist steadfastly. Presently, the relationship between India and Pakistan is marked by instances of territorial disputes, specifically in regions such as Kashmir and Sir Creek. Additionally, the landscape is fraught with security challenges, prominently terrorism, coupled with issues of energy deficits and resource shortages, particularly in the realm of water scarcity. Strategic uncertainty looms large,

fuelled by an ongoing arms race, while a geopolitical tug-of-war further complicates the already intricate dynamics between the two nations. (Hussain, 2019).

Entities or factions perceiving themselves as threatened minorities typically employ a range of strategies to navigate their predicament, encompassing five fundamental approaches. In broad terms, these involve distancing from the bond, either physically or psychologically; assimilating with the principal power; accommodating by coexisting as a weaker entity through concessions and compromises with the dominant power; altering perceptions of the adversarial state through public diplomacy, influence, or corruption; leveraging external actors to restore the balance of power; and ultimately, reshaping the power dynamics through conflict or other means, such as outpacing the other side in terms of economic or population growth. Over the past five decades, India and Pakistan have considered and engaged with each of these plans in their complex relationship (Cohen, 2003).

India's neighbouring countries, including Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Burma (Myanmar), Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, lag significantly behind India in terms of per capita indicators. India stands out in size, economic growth, population, and human resources, asserting dominance across these dimensions. Even when considering the natural resources available in these neighbouring states, they do not emerge as formidable competitors. Debates among Indian scholars revolve around India's overarching influence in the entire geographical region. India holds the unique position of sharing coastlines with six countries, an unparalleled feat among its neighbours who lack direct border connections with each other.

Following the occupation of Tibet, China extended its reach to the border of the Asian subcontinent, facing accessibility challenges due to the rugged Northern terrain. K.M. Panikkar argued that Geography constitutes the permanent basis of every nation's history. India's advantageous geography is evident in its relationship with landlocked countries like Bhutan and Nepal, which are economically reliant on cooperation with India for their survival.

Similarly, both Bangladesh and Pakistan depend on India for water resources, underscoring India's geographical and strategic significance in the region. (Sajjad et al, 2022).

Thesis statement

The interaction of Akhand Bharat, the Hindutva ideology, and the rise of populism and fascism in India creates a complex and dynamic political environment. While Hindutva strongly emphasizes India's cultural and religious identity, Akhand Bharat sees India as a single geographical and historical entity. Strongman leadership and exclusionary laws are factors in the growth of populist fascism. Concerns about communal tensions, the degradation of democratic ideals, and strained foreign ties are raised by India's rise under politicians who adhere to these philosophies. What will be the long-term effects of India's rise under such leadership, and how will it influence the country's social structure, political stability, and reputation around the world?

Hypothetical Speaking

The South Asian area may experience increased fears and instability as India develops under the influence of Hindutva ideology, the idea of Akhand Bharat, and the growth of populist and fascist leadership. Existing tensions with its neighbours, especially Pakistan and Bangladesh, could be aggravated by the promotion of religious nationalism and the demise of secular principles within India. These ideologies may result in territorial disputes and tense relations if an assertive foreign policy is maintained. Additionally, minority communities in India and the rest of the region may experience greater discrimination and marginalization, which could lead to internal and international conflicts. The hypothesis asserts that India's rise under such conditions might lead to discontent and unrest in the area.

On the other hand, a contrasting view suggests that the rise of India need not necessarily lead to tensions and instability. India may emphasize cooperation and peaceful dispute resolution, taking inspiration from China's strategy for achieving its ascension. India can contribute to a more secure and stable area

by stepping up multilateral diplomacy with its neighbours in South Asia, similar to China's engagement with ASEAN countries. India might develop as a responsible considerable power by embracing liberal values and democratic principles and participating in constructive regional alliances. In this hypothesis, if cooperative and diplomatic ideals lead, India may positively impact South Asia by fostering peace, stability, and economic growth.

Theoretical framework: Power Transition Theory

The historical trajectory of India-Pakistan relations has been marked by numerous crises and conflicts, reflecting the active nature of their comparative power. The interaction between these two countries can be categorized into two phases, shaped by the ebb and flow of their power dynamics.

Firstly, a balance of power framework maintained relative stability from 1949 to 2015, characterized by numerous variables manipulate different phases of their past. During these periods, the balance of power contributed to relatively peaceful relations between India and Pakistan. However, instances such as the wars in 1948, 1965, 1971, and 1991 disrupted this balance, leading to power imbalances and transitions. Secondly, contrary to power transition theory, the South Asian regional system is considered non-hierarchical, as India has not achieved hegemonic status. A persistent balance of power system is sustained by Pakistan through internal and external balancing techniques, including nuclear deterrence and external alliances. Despite India's relatively larger army, population, and economy, it grapples with establishing hegemony in the region, posing a perceived threat to Pakistan.Pakistan, content with the existing status quo, employs a strategy of maintaining the balance of power. In contrast, India, dissatisfied and fuelled by ambition for big power status, seeks to upset the prevailing order. This dissatisfaction stems from historical, ideological, religious, territorial, military, regional, and international factors, driving India's desire for a power transition and the status of a hegemonic state in the region.

The analysis of the historical dynamics between India and Pakistan underscores a pattern: whenever there is a tilt in the balance of power, severe crises or armed conflicts ensue. Power transitions create instability, opening opportunities for conflict. Consequently, it is argued that a hierarchical form of power change cannot lead to solidity and harmony to the region. Instead, relying on a sub-system based on the balance of power is considered the most reliable strategy for fostering peace and prosperity (Bukhari, 2015).

Hindutva Ideology:

The term Hindutva carries a potent, nuanced, and elusive significance, intricately linked to the Aryan peoples of the Indus River, a segment of the Persian Vedic Aryans. It is interwoven with the contemporary Hindu religion and its adherents, forming a lengthy historical narrative that underscores their perceived long-standing superiority over other communities. This narrative, essentially a belief system, asserts a connection of people and places to India from the Himalayas to the sea. Rooted in history, it becomes a pivotal component shaping the belief in the inherent superiority of those who identify with it. The Hindutva ideology, deeply embedded in history, is a fundamental aspect of the modern BJP movement (Zwanenberg, 2022).

When Hindutva emerged as an anti-colonial resistance movement against British authority in India in the nineteenth century, it began its intellectual journey. Early proponents claimed that Indian civilization was superior in terms of race (having Aryan origins) and language (being the ancestor of Indo-European tongues), inspired by academics from Europe. The British policy of segregating Muslims and Hindus into separate electorates in 1909—allowing them to only support candidates who adhered to their respective religions— sowed the seeds of division and encouraged the emergence of identity politics framed by religion. As Hindu sabhas proliferated, anti-Muslim and anti-British attitudes were fostered and ultimately led to the foundation of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1914. Through printed materials, "Hindu consciousness" was spread, fostering a national identity centered around Hindu symbols and

customs. Hindutva in pre-independence India interacted with European intellectuals and looked to European models for inspiration. Hindutva has had a tremendous impact on nation-building and the development of a majoritarian identity since India's independence in 1947. Hindutva which sees violence as a justifiable way to establish ethnonational territorial claims has occasionally taken the form of violent acts. But with the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, it really started to acquire traction. Modi's government has constructed Hindutva as synonymous with Indian nationalism, delineating Hindus as 'insiders' and former religious grouping, particularly Muslims, as 'outsiders' (Leidig, 2020).

The resounding re-election of Modi and the BJP in 2019 affirmed that Hindutva had transitioned from a process of becoming to a mainstream ideology, enjoying widespread normalcy and legitimacy. The Indian Constitution's Article 370, which gave Jammu and Kashmir special status, was repealed in 2019. This action fulfilled a Hindutva dream to bring back Akhand Bharat, or undivided India. In order to achieve this, Hindutva must restore land that has been lost to time. The RSS was temporarily outlawed as an organization as a result of the 1948 killing of Mahatma Gandhi by RSS member Nathuram Godse, who disagreed with Gandhi's demands for "Hindu-Muslim unity" and the surrender of territory that would become Pakistan. The act of violence perpetrated by Godse has been rationalized by Hindutva actors as an expression of ethnonational aspirations.

The Concept of Akhand Bharat

The idea of Akhand Bharat is, at its core, an idea that sets to create a political morality devoid of any dialogue or conversation on the diverse histories of India. It denies the existence of these diverse histories and, in the process, creates a myth of a unified India that is repetitively marketed as a product of ontological well-being. Through its revisionist overtures, the proponents of this idea have manufactured a political exigency that claims to supply this myth as essential for reasons that transcend existence and survival, but for an

imagined well-being that simultaneously snatches the historical existence of others. It must be amply clear that the idea of Akhand Bharat hinges upon two ideas. Primarily, Hindutva aims to establish a political entity exclusively for a specific group identified as 'pure' individuals, namely the Hindus, in stark contrast to the perceived 'other,' exemplified by the Muslims. This vision underscores a desire to shape the polity based on religious identity, promoting an exclusionary narrative. Secondly, the foundational concept of Akhand Bharat is rooted in the idea of a mythologically traced sacred geography. According to this premise, the modern nation-state should be constructed and perpetually exist upon this sacred geography. The notion of Akhand Bharat reflects a belief in a unified and continuous territorial expanse, guided by mythological narratives, shaping the envisioned boundaries and identity of the nation-state (Midha, 2023).

Since Vinayak Damodar Savarkar is the earliest known Hindutva ideologue associated with the idea of an Akhand Bharat, we begin with understanding his ideas for the geographical space that India occupies today and how he came about formulating them. In his presidential address at the 19th Session of the Akhil Bhartiya Hindu Mahasabha, held at Karnavati (1937), he said,

"We will declare, as an idea at least, that India of future will be one and inseparable from Sindh to Assam, from Kashmir to Rameshwar, not just unified but a Universal country."

This statement is of significance for two reasons. First, it provided, in a complete territorial sense, what the nation should look like if constituted along the lines of the ideologue Savarkar. The idea seemed territorially simple, i.e., it would include everything from Sindh (today's Pakistan) to Assam and Kashmir (a land of contention between the two nations) to Rameshwar. Secondly, in using the word Hindustan, Savarkar was too invested in its literal meaning—one could argue that Savarkar's skewed reading of the term created a new reinterpretation of what Hindustan meant. It was his concept of territorial sovereignty—a territory for the Hindus. The fact that he stated in the same speech that "the Hindu Mahasabha is responsible for the upkeep,

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security, and advancement of the Hindu ethnicity, religion, and civilization for the growth and glory of 'Hindu Rashtra' pre-eminently national the body corresponding to the Hindu Nation as a whole" further supports this agenda-setting declaration for the party (Midha, 2023).

Rise of Fascism and Populism in Rising India

In contemporary times, the Bharatiya Janata Party, having gained political and electoral legitimacy, does not shy away from creating a proper cultural hegemonic order based along ethnic-majoritarian lines. It must also be kept in mind that the creation of 'the people' in congruence with the said ideology, as Vinay Sitapati argues, has been a project that has been going on for almost a hundred years. In this context, understanding the registers on which both Hindu Nationalism and populism operate is crucial. Both assume a preexisting populace, in which either the party or its leader speaks. Both function under the assumption that the party leader is the guardian of the public's welfare and that there's only one account of it (Midha, 2023).

The political ascent of Narendra Modi is closely associated with the infamous 2002 Gujarat Riots, a pivotal event that thrust him into national and international media spotlight. Occurring just five months into his tenure as the chief minister of Gujarat, the incident involved the burning of a train car full of Hindu activists in Godhra by a group of purportedly Muslim men, resulting in the tragic death of 58 people. The aftermath witnessed some of the worst Hindu-Muslim communal riots in post-independence India, with over a thousand fatalities and tens of thousands displaced, predominantly Muslims. The event drew parallels with the violence during the Partition of India and Pakistan (Kalyan, 2020).

Examining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) within the historical context of fascist politics spanning the last 200 years, it is observed that fascism, in various forms, has emerged globally. The continued existence of the BJP and its parent organization, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), in the twenty-first century prompts a comparative analysis. Religion, while not universal,

plays a significant role in many fascist circumstances, including the development of Indian fascism. The Indian Hindu community, driven by a 'United One India' concept, has seen demands for reunification from certain political parties and leaders, such as the World Hindu Organisation (VHP), RSS, and Shiv Sena. Some even openly called for the invasion and occupation of neighbouring countries, reflecting an ambition for overwhelming regional power and hegemony (Zwanenberg, 2022).

Narendra Modi's emergence is intertwined with the ideologies of the BJP and RSS, with their fundamentalist idea of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) originating in colonial-era revivalist movements. Hindutva envisions a pre-colonial past when the entire Indian subcontinent constituted a great Hindu civilization, presenting a 'golden era' before foreign domination by Muslim invaders and European colonizers. This narrative allowed Hindu nationalists to construct a homogeneous Indian identity and respond to the colonial encounter in South Asia. The synergy of BJP and RSS ideologies has played a role in shaping Modi as a political figure (Kalyan, 2020).

The call for the reunification of India has been publicly articulated by organizations like the World Hindu Organisation (VHP), RSS, Shiv Sena, and the BJP. Lawmakers such as Subramanian Swamy have gone as far as demanding the invasion and occupation of neighbouring countries like Bangladesh. Similar sentiments have been expressed by others, including a retired justice of the Indian Supreme Court, who argued that the division of India was a British strategy to weaken the country and advocated for the reunification of Pakistan and Bangladesh with India. The secretary general of RSS, Dr. Mohan Bhagat, also endorsed the idea, stating that reunifying Bangladesh and Pakistan with India is the only way to establish peace and stability in South Asia. Historian Dr. Sodananda Sapri and his followers actively promote the concept of a united India through seminars across the country (Shahadat, 2014) (Ahmed, 2023).

India and Pakistan

Pakistan is perceived by India as a crucial factor in an uneven coalition that aligns the West, Islam, China, and other adversarial states alongside New Delhi. Current years have witnessed a prolonged focus on the sea of radical Islamic forces led by Pakistan, with China perceived as a partner in this alliance. Samuel P. Huntington's thesis on alliance between Islamic and "Confucian" civilizations finds resonance among portions of the Indian tactical community that had already established this connection. The encircling presence of states around India is portrayed as a ready-made image of hold, symbolizing threats from all directions, including the north, east, west, and the sea, as naval theorists emphasize the threat from both the Arabs and the Europeans (Cohen, 2003).

India and Pakistan, emerging in 1947 as descendant states of British India, adopted characteristic identities. India embraced secularism, albeit with Hindu majoritarianism, while Pakistan, due to its ethnonational diversity, opted for an overpowering Islamic character for nation construction and security considerations against a perceived 'Hindu' adversary. These divergent state ideologies resulted in an immediate post-independence war over the control of Jammu and Kashmir. Subsequent conflicts centred around the assessment and distribution of colonial institutional and monetary legacies, including the division of civil and military bureaucracy. The Indo-Pakistani wars in 1965 and 1971, the latter leading to the creation of Bangladesh, reflected the ongoing quest for strategic parity by nuclear-capable Pakistan. The Siachen issue (1984), Brasstacks (1987), and Zarb-e-Momin (1989) further strained bilateral relationships (Hussain, 2019).

Pakistan is viewed as an illustration of neo-imperialism from an Indian standpoint. It is believed that neighbouring countries, like Pakistan, have their domestic politics and international policy distorted when they align with strong external powers (like China, the United States, or Britain). Any compromise between Delhi and Islamabad over Kashmir is seen as being

hampered by the perception that the U.S.-Pakistan partnership has hardened Pakistani politics and foreign policy. Indians believe that Pakistan made matters worse by permitting its territory to be utilized for Cold War alliance goals, so bringing major dominance into the area. The American tie is seen as emboldening Pakistan to challenge India by providing advanced weapons that facilitated the 1965 attack. The preferred Indian solution is the international appreciation of benign, helpful, liberal regional powers, rather than interference by global hegemons or adjacent regional powers (Cohen, 2003).

India and Nepal

One area of ongoing tension between the two countries has been the management of international water resources that originate in the Himalayas and pass from Nepal into India. Protests and amendments have resulted from tensions over transboundary waters, as shown by the Koshi and Gandak treaties signed in 1954 and 1959, despite the open border, strong people-to-people contacts, and shared culture, religion, and tradition. The 1996 Mahakali Treaty confronts difficulties in implementation, which has led to a generalized animosity towards India among Nepali people and sporadic rifts in the bilateral relationship (Vasani,2023).

The Hindu and Buddhist ties, along with common beliefs and customs, foster improved bilateral connections. Pilgrim tourism acts as a confidence-building measure, exemplified by Nepalese pilgrims benefiting from tours in India, including Tirupati. Religious and cultural ties, coupled with mutual support, contribute to the previously existing bilateral trade between the two neighbouring countries (Dada et al., 2022).

In the context of the Mahakali River basin and the proposed Pancheshwar project, Indian bureaucrats assert that 80% of the catchment area lies within India, with only 20% in Nepal. They argue that the majority of rainfall feeding the river and the submergence due to the dam also predominantly impact India, leading to higher costs of displacement, resettlement, and rehabilitation on the Indian side. Despite international laws, Indian officials assert their generosity

towards Nepal in the drafting of the Mahakali Treaty. However, Nepal's insistence on equal benefits from the project is a source of frustration among Indian bureaucrats. A member of the Nepali delegation for the 1996 Mahakali Agreement disputes the claim of 80% catchment area in India, pointing out the contested source of the Mahakali River. Another official argues that applying similar logic would mean 100% of the catchment area for the Koshi and Gandak rivers lies within Nepal, challenging India's construction of barrages and extensive water consumption. The mention of catchment areas in some South Asian rivers being in China raises concerns about the potential implications of such logic for India (Vasani, 2023).

India and Bangladesh

Bangladesh holds strategic importance for India, with its security and integrity closely tied to the neighbouring nation. However, India's approach shifted from a friendly stance to a coercive one when Bangladesh sought to develop relations with China (Ahmed, 2023). India aspires to establish hegemony over Bangladesh based on historical, political, and economic reasons. The Indian perspective asserts Hinduism as the ancient culture of the region, opposing the influence of Islam, which they perceive as foreign. The Indian Hindu community advocates for the reunification of India, viewing the creation of Pakistan and India as a mere division that failed to resolve Hindu-Muslim communal problems. India's historical military actions post-independence, merging semi-sovereign princely states, exemplify this viewpoint (Ahmed, 2023).Numerous bilateral issues, including border conflicts, river water supply disputes, the Farakka dam, immigration control, and illegal trade, demand urgent resolution between India and Bangladesh. The construction of the Farakka Barrage on the Ganga River near the Bangladesh border has significantly impacted the Padma River, affecting the livelihoods of one-third of the Bangladeshi population (Ahmed, 2023).

The Siliguri Corridor, the narrow gateway to seven northeastern provinces of India, is crucial for economic activities. India's dependence on Bangladesh for

access to these provinces raises concerns, and any closure of the corridor by Bangladesh could lead to India's isolation from these states. India aims to use Bangladesh's land to curb insurgency in the northeastern provinces. Agreements in 1972 and 2019 emphasize not allowing secessionists to use Bangladesh territory, benefiting India strategically (Ahmed, 2023).

India's occupation of maritime areas within Bangladesh's boundary in the Bay of Bengal has been a longstanding dispute. Despite bilateral agreements, the issue remained unresolved until Bangladesh pursued international arbitration at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in 2009. The PCA ruled in favor of Bangladesh, awarding 80% of the disputed area to the nation. India's actions in occupying maritime territory and its alleged involvement in political unrest and assassinations have been seen as manifestations of hegemonic attitudes over Bangladesh (Ahmed, 2023).

Conclusion

The rise of fascist and populist leadership to power in one of the biggest democracies ever existed certainly will have consequences not only for the South Asian region but on a global scale as well. The very foundations of post-partition India were built on secular and liberal values to accommodate millions of Indians with a unique multicultural and multireligious kaleidoscope. Today, its population is well above one billion humans, and among them are people preaching hundreds of different religions and belonging to hundreds of different cultures. The rise of Hindu nationalism in the hands of BJP's leadership poses a great threat to this beautiful face of India. But the impacts aren't only barricaded within the Indian borders. South Asia is a very complex part of the globe. It resides two very belligerent nuclear powers, with the addition of another power i.e. China rising as a potential global hegemon in the backyard of South Asia. Under such circumstances, it has been widely agreed that the rise of fascism and populism in the Indian political outlook is fundamentally transforming South Asian politics and pushing the regional political outlook towards further instabilities and mistrust.

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